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YOUR HOLIDAYS IN INDIA

BY

R. T. SHAHANI

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YOUR HOLIDAYS IN INDIA

DEDICATED TO

My father, Principal T.K. Shahani
of Bhavnagar, who initiated me in-
to the culture of India

and

My wife, Dolly Shahani, who
made it possible for me to convey
the spirit of India in words.

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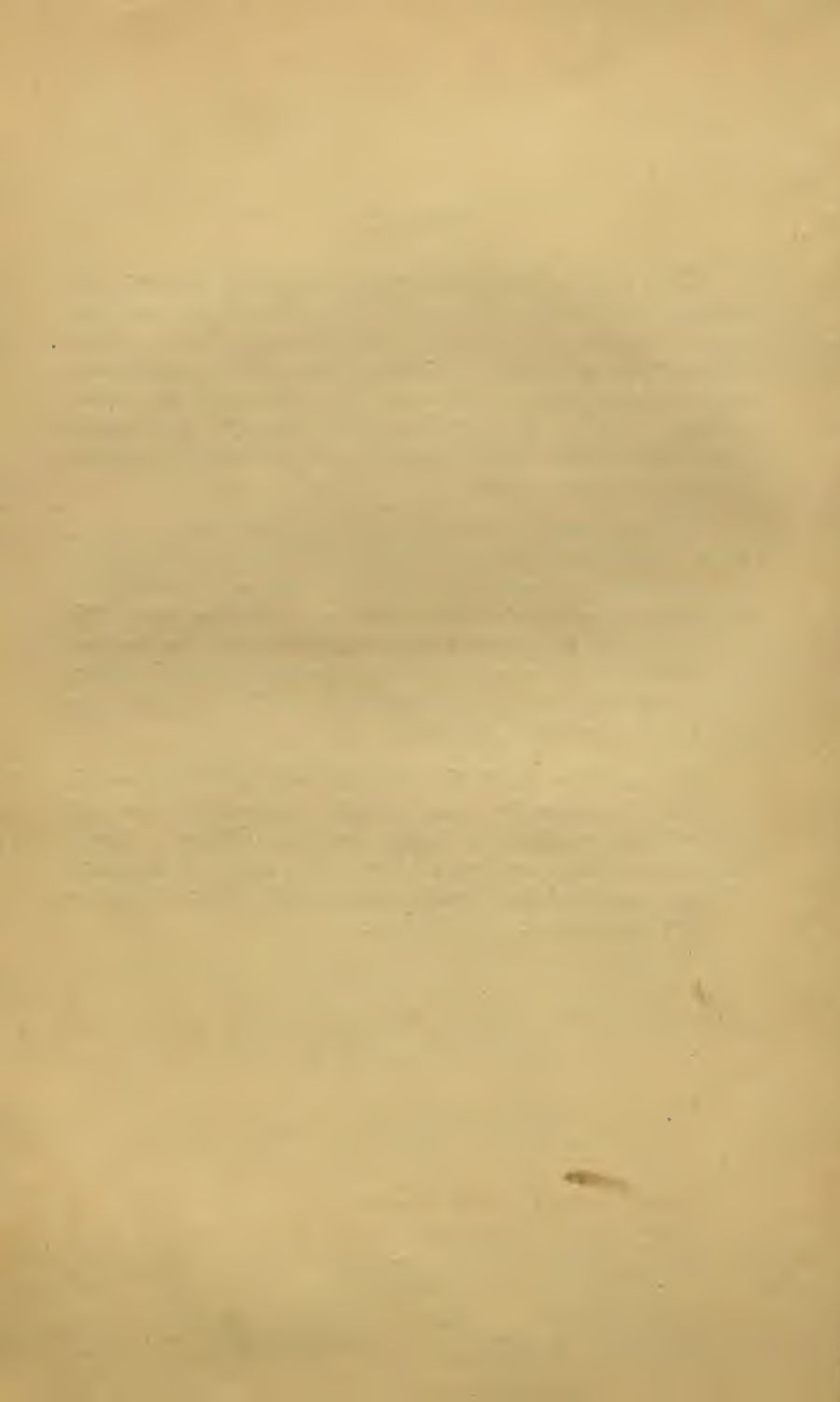
I must express my deep sense of gratitude to Shri K. S. Ganapathy whose constant co-operation in the typing and preparation of the script has been of immense value to me. But for his enthusiasm, the book may never have seen the light of the day.

PREFACE.

This little offering is meant primarily for you, the visiting tourist who has come from abroad for the first time to India. It is hoped that the few words which follow will help you to understand and to appreciate some of the typical items in the repertoire of Indian culture. If this purpose is served, a great deal would have been done to bring India into the comity of nations through tourism alone.

We are new to tourism and we have quite a lot to learn, sometimes by mistakes, at others by a study of the methods followed by others. But we are willing to learn and proud to acknowledge our limitations. We feel that we have something to offer. It will be for you to receive it. If you are a little inconvenienced during your stay with us, be patient for a while and you may not be disappointed after all!

Remember: both the Government and the people of India are keenly alive to their responsibilities and everything possible is being done at different levels throughout the country to foster the spirit of tourism. We honestly feel that tourism can bring nations together as they have never done before.



Photographs:

R. J. CHINWALA

K. S. KHAMBADKONE

VISHNUDAS SHIRALI

Cover: ELLORA: *Kailash Temple*

Back cover: ELLORA: *Figure flying through the air*



ART: LIVING WORLD OF TRUTH AND BEAUTY

BHUBANESHWAR: *Detail of Lingaraj Temple*



BEAUTY: SIGHT FOR GODS

RUDRAPRAYAG: *Sangam—Confluence of Rivers*



CULTURE: TRUTH, GOODNESS, BEAUTY

ELEPHANTA: *Trimurti depicting Creation-Preservation-Regeneration*

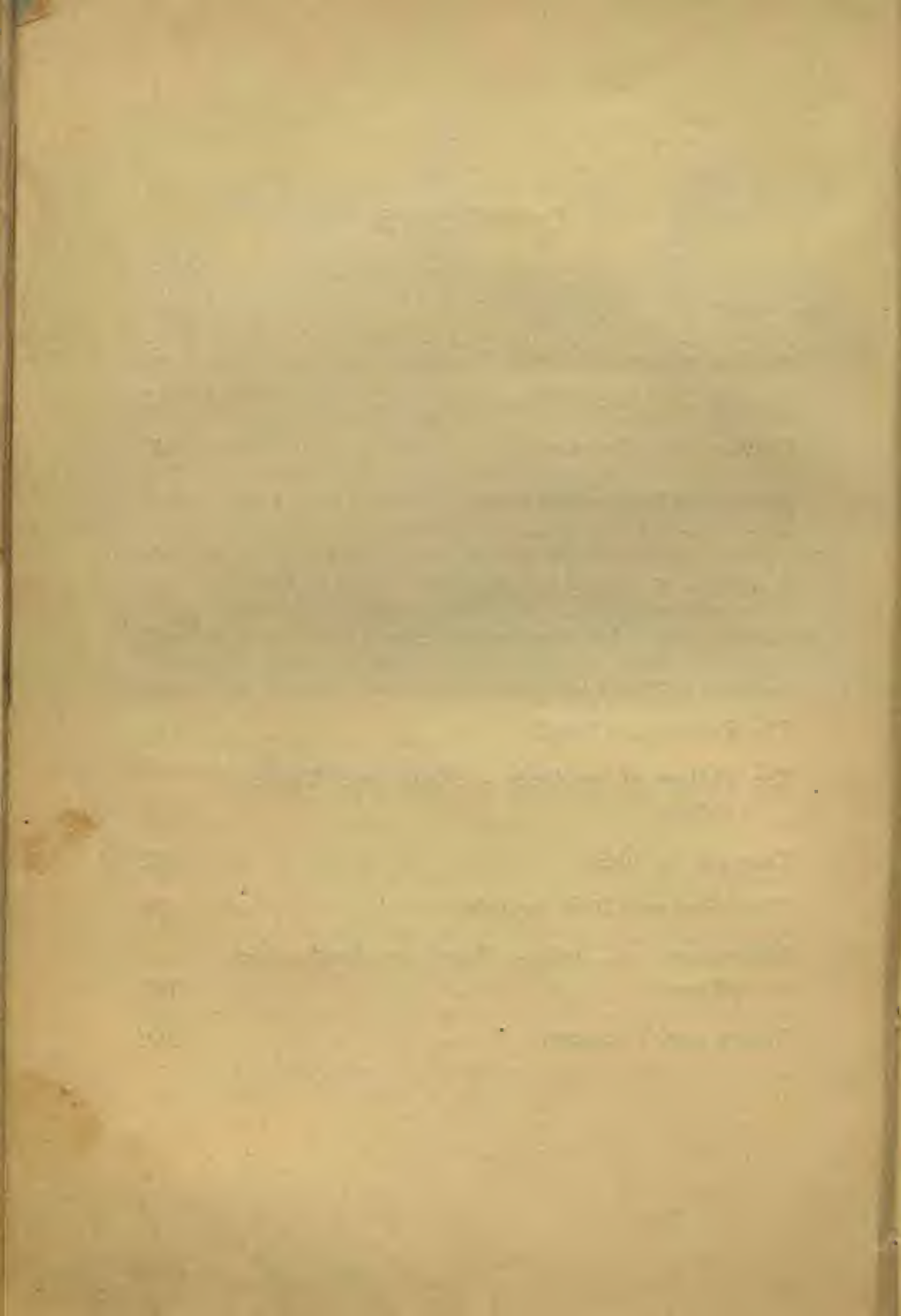


PROGRESS: DEMOCRACY AT WORK

NEW DELHI: *The Parliament*

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO INDIA

As your boat is about to disembark in Ballard Pier, the first thought which is likely to cross your mind will be: 'was it worth your while to make a long pilgrimage to this ancient land called India?' You have, no doubt, heard such a lot about this country. The books you have read on this subject are, perhaps, legion; you have probably a formidable array of friends who have visited this country before you. Their experience is your lode-star. Nevertheless there is a certain amount of trepidation in your heart as you come nearer to Bombay, the Gate-way of India, the 'urbs prima', of Ptolemy fame. May be you have come all the way from the States or from UK or again from any of the innumerable countries situated in Europe. May be you will receive an initial shock as you set your foot on this land. For this is something new, something which you have probably not come across before. You are likely to be flooded with sights, sounds and smells which will probably leave a lasting impression on your mind. Why, you may even be disillusioned and elevated in the same breath.

Some of our visitors have reacted unfavourably in the initial instance. Of course, the Customs authorities have been generally co-operative and there is a warm welcome awaiting you either at the hands of the various tourist agencies or the officials of the Government Regional Tourist Office in Bombay, who will be equally keen to extend a wave of good cheer to you. But then there are other things, petty annoyances which sometimes cause minor irritations. The chokra-boys are a pest; there are occasional instances of begging and

through it all emerges a picture of poverty amidst plenty. Then the climate of the place is unusual in the sense that it is generally warm and sticky at least while you are in Bombay and this does not help you out in any way.

Then there are certain facets of modern India which might baffle you! One of them may well be prohibition which will seem strange to you. You will see our clubs and picture houses and dance floors which will give you an impression of a highly stylised mode of existence, which will probably be reminiscent of Western civilisation. You will be shown some of the most charming spots of India as also the scenic side of life. You will then appreciate the forces against which we have to contend and the odds which we have to surmount if progress is at all possible. You will then remember that the impact of British Imperialism over the last 200 years has left traces which are not easy to obliterate with the best of will at our disposal. Moreso, if we are going to follow the methods of traditional western democracy and not of the countries where dictatorships are practised. You know it for certain that progress in a democratic country is slow but certain and you will be glad to learn that we are following in the same footsteps. You would, therefore, readily understand that while we have gargantuan schemes on the anvil which will considerably help us in overcoming the problem of poverty and giving ample supplies of food to the millions of India's population, this is necessarily going to take some time! Please bear with us and remember that we have just had over eight years of Independence, a mere bagatelle in the life-history of a nation. At the same time we are proud of the considerable progress which has been made even in this short span of time and it is to our satisfaction that if we maintain this rate, we are certain to overcome most of our problems within the next decade or so.

What is it that we have to give you? Of course as a Tourist you will be shown the various points of

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interest which we have, places of art, beauty and culture of which this hoary land has every reason to be proud. In the comity of nations, we rightly feel that ours is one of the most ancient civilizations. Even if we compare ourselves to some of the most ancient of world civilizations such as Egypt, Greece and Rome, we feel that our progress in the days of long, long ago was not less spectacular, in the hay-day of our glory. It is these layers of time, tradition and achievement which give us our sense of pride, which makes it so difficult for you to understand the numerous contradictions in our character. We are perhaps a little too conscious of our ancient culture. Some of us are so much steeped in it that we almost develop an attitude of reverence for the past and fail to look around for the glories of the present and still more brighter prospects of the future. When you have had your round of India, you will no doubt understand the full implications of this point of view. Take some of our spots which are beautiful in every sense of the word and as judged by any standards which you may choose to apply. For example, we have a number of hill stations of surpassing beauty, scattered in all the four corners of India so that even if the time at your disposal is short, you are likely to have a glimpse of sheer beauty, the like of which you may well compare to either the Alpine glory of the Swiss Alps or some of the hill spots in the States. It is possible that the standard of amenities which we offer you may not quite come up to the level of your expectation. After all, we have a slightly different way of living in India. It is only because of the impact of Western civilization that some of us have imbibed the methods of living in accordance with the traditions of the West. This is all to the good because today we are reaping the benefits of the change in attitude which we adopted almost compulsorily during the last 50 years or so. The hill stations have the added advantage of giving you a type of climate to which you are probably already used. We are told

that the Kashmir Valley is, to some extent, reminiscent of the Alpine scenery at its best and the view of the snows from your hotel bed room at Darjeeling or Kurseong when the sun rises early in the morning, will afford to you a unique experience. We are sometimes told that the climate in places like Ootacamund for example, brings back nostalgic memories to the minds of Europeans used to British climate in early summer. In passing, we express our thanks to the Britishers who were primarily responsible for discovering some of the hills for us.

It is not, however, in the hills and valleys of India that you have a glimpse of the beauty of India. It is strangely enough in stone that we find a manifestation of the genius of this country. I have no doubt that you will, in the course of your peregrinations visit places like Ajanta Caves, Sanchi and Khajuraho. Any of these will be typical illustrations of what I have in mind. Different nations excel in different ways in giving expression to their innermost sentiments and feelings. The all pervasive force, the *elan vital*, the spirit behind the Indian genius is undoubtedly primarily religious. Whether it is purely Buddhist, Jaina or Hindu, the manifestations are in spirit the same although the forms adopted might be different for different purposes. Very often—and this is a baffling phenomenon in India—different sections of religion vie with each other in presenting national genius at successive stages of its manifestations. It is predominantly so in the three places which we have mentioned above. Different Governments came and went, modes of expression and the schools of thought underwent political, social and artistic changes, nevertheless the spirit that was in man remained uppermost and asserted itself in every possible way. We are indeed lucky that most of the manifestations of this genius have survived. A visit to any place of architectural excellence will convince you of the beauty of the spirit about which we talk so much. It will also

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tell you that this land of India which was till very recently known as the land of Maharajas and snake charmers and Yogis is basically something very different. It will give you a new conception of religion which is India. It will tell you, for example, that the Indians, by and large, even today live and preach religion almost throughout the day and the night. Consequently, their genius expresses itself in building temples and other memorials to their deities. This again is very confusing to any outsider who comes to India as it will take him quite sometime to understand the chaotic condition which prevails amongst the manifold Gods and Goddesses whom he desires to worship. However, the spirit behind it is all the same.

Turning now to the religious side of life, what is a distinguishing feature of our religious life is the anthropomorphic conception. We invest our Gods and Goddesses with all possible human qualities which in fact makes it easier for us to identify our day to day existence with that our Gods. Our Gods and Goddesses are made, doubtless, by man. The Gods must sleep, wake up, if possible, to music, bathe, clothe then feed! Why, they must even have a proper mid-day siesta. Of course the priest wants his rest too! The round-the-clock ritual is without end. This is a phenomenon the like of which you may not come across readily elsewhere!

There is, however, so much talk about certain facets of our religion which have caught the imagination of the Westerners. Often the real is smothered in the fake. We have a very large population of do-nothings who don saffron robes, practise austerities and believe in fantastic ideas. If you go to places like Banaras and Hardwar, you are likely to come across men whose eyes are just hollow sockets because they have done nothing but look at the sun perpetually, men whose legs are shrivelled stumps because they have stood up perpetually, men who have sat and slept on beds of nails for years on end. These are interesting oddities which should not, how-

ever, detract from the real value of religion.

Then again if you take the life which is led by many of the priests and Brahmins around the temples, you are likely to develop a certain feeling of revulsion against formal religion. The temples merely form the medium through which God is worshipped. The impression which we have sometimes given abroad is that while we are a deeply religious people, we are unaffected by the joys and sorrows of every-day existence. This is however far from the truth. It is on this account that I would like you to visit in particular architectural beauties like Ajanta, Ellora, Khajuraho and the Orissan Architecture at Puri, Bhuvaneshwar and Konarak. Here you will find that while the theme may be deeply religious, mundane existence is emphasised most vigorously. Which also applies to the tales from the Jatakas or the life of Buddha. While the main purpose of the artists was to convey to you the sublime theme of renunciation of Prince Gautama, they never failed to indicate the mode of life as was currently led by the people of that age. Remember: Buddha was born in BC 526. The court scenes, the scenes of toilet, of music, song and dance as depicted vividly through the frescoes of the Ajanta which have survived merely show us that the interest of the Indian in the sheer joy of existence was profound. At the same time, the philosophic background is unmistakably one of consciousness of the impermanence of all that is of this earth. We feel that a study of this conception has rich potentialities for the Westerners and it is for you to decide whether there is anything of higher ultimate value in all this. In the present atomic age in which we are living, we are likely to be moulded more and more in scientific traditions which will probably take away our minds more and more from God. While this may not, by itself, be calamitous, the main result from the severely practical point of view is that we lose the peace of mind which, according to ancient Indians, was of fundamental importance.

This is a thing which is being missed by the Western world in particular today and we hope to convince you that there are things of the spirit and the mind which are far more important than all the scientific inventions of which the West ever so proud!

To depart from the spiritual to the rigidly mundane, let us enumerate very briefly a few items which must immediately interest the new comer to India. To wit, the seasons first.

In India, we have the summer, the monsoon and the winter. The spring and the autumn are of negligible importance. The days in summer are pretty hot, particularly in the Northern India and in places in the interior. The nights are generally cool and pleasant even in the hottest parts. The seaside resorts are pleasant even in summer. The hills are a favourite resort from early April to late June. The South West monsoon extends roughly from about the middle of June to the end of September. The West Coast and the hills have a fairly good blast of rain. The North East or return monsoon comes from November to January. Its impact is however negligible. The winter is usually from end of October to end of February, whereafter there is a perceptible, often abrupt change in the weather! Here again, while the Northern plains are positively cold, the hills definitely chilly, particularly in the North, the South and the places adjacent to the sea remain remarkably cool.

Hence, the problem of clothing assumes difficulties. However, tropical semi-woollen panamas are a safe bet and should see you through on most of the occasions, if your wardrobe is supplemented by some good warm underwear. It is however best to be prepared for abrupt changes in climate particularly if you are travelling. Cochin in December can be warm and muggy; in Delhi, you will welcome a fire—and so on!

As regards beddings, all important through trains provide bed rolls at very nominal rates, particularly on

all newly built air conditioned coaches which have made rail journeys a distinct luxury in India. Similarly, all modern hotels are well equipped for bedding and linen. If however you are roughing out and going to small places on your own, it is safer to have a small bedding of your own. A pillow, a couple of warm blankets and a few cotton bedsheets should see you through.

The problem of health in a new country is important. Even in a big place, where all facilities are available, medical assistance may not always be handy and may, in any case, take some time to obtain. Moreso, if you are out in the country. A small compact medicine chest is therefore important. Colds, coughs, stomach disorders, insect bites should be catered for. A few powders, some tincture iodine, a few dressings, potassium permanganate, dettol and you should be all right.

A word about food! While good hotels in big cities will serve fresh stuff, it is best to be careful when touring through villages. Exposed foodstuffs are best avoided—so are things like unboiled water, exposed milk etc. It is best to carry tinned goods while touring. A few inoculations particularly against typhoid, cholera and small pox are very necessary. You never know. As I said: forewarned is forearmed!

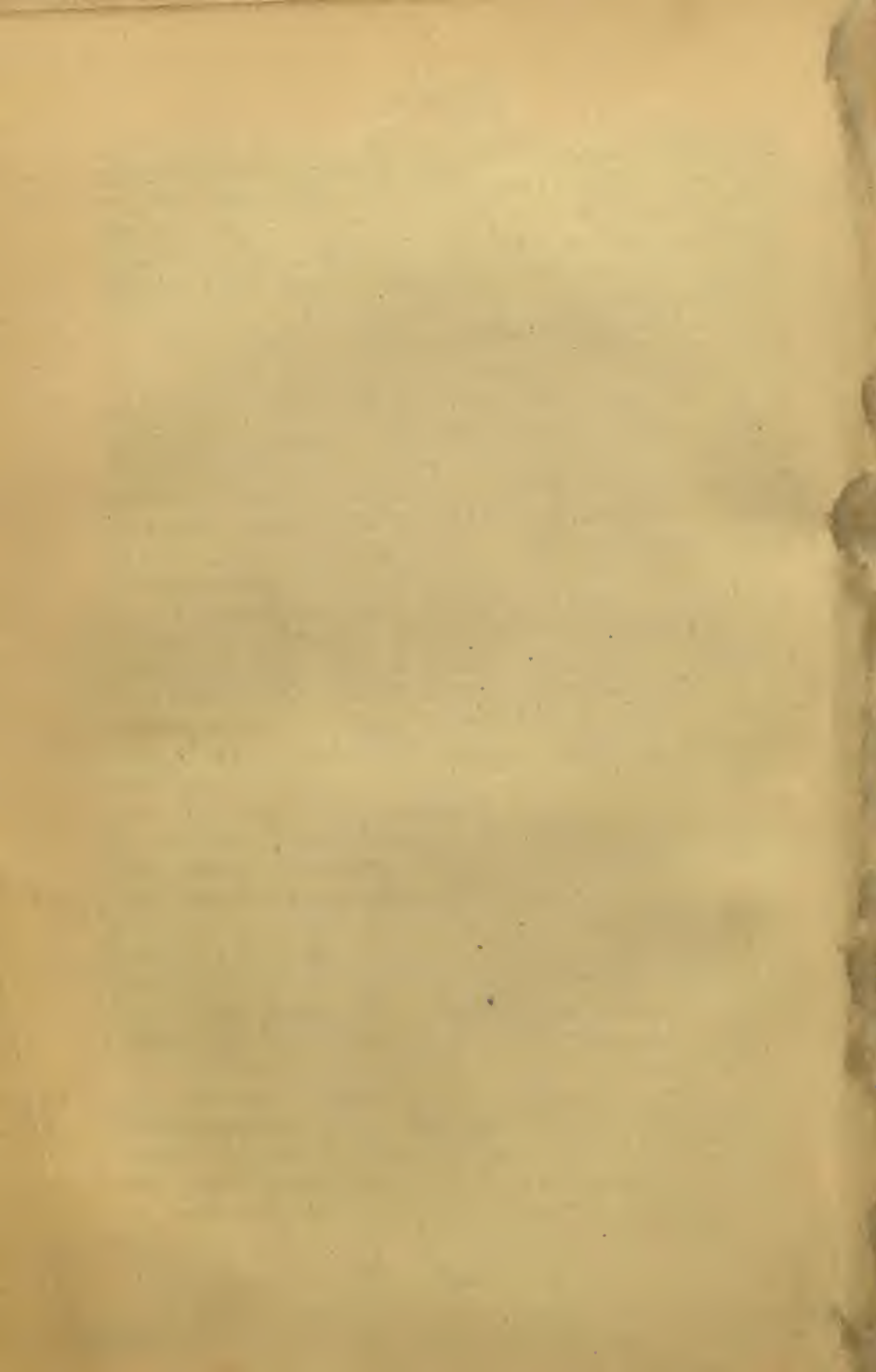
A word about Customs. The Baggage Declaration Form should be filled in clearly on arrival in India. With a fair declaration, no problems are likely to ensue. After payment, a receipt should be obtained and then the baggage collected. Items of dutiable commodities are clearly defined on the form to save future embarrassments and ambiguities. Articles are passed free and without let or hindrance upto the limits prescribed.

Tourism in free India has recently assumed the pride of place. Thanks to the zealous activities of the Government of India, Regional Tourist Offices have already started functioning in several important parts of India like Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras. They are manned by energetic young men and women who

Introduction

are fired by only one zeal and that is to look after your comforts. Their representatives often meet you on arrival and wave a welcome to you which you are not likely to forget in a hurry! And once you are in their able hands, your further passage through India is likely to be most easy.

So welcome to India!



CHAPTER I

AROUND INDIA'S HILL STATIONS

PERHAPS one of the most important contributions which the British made to our lives was the discovery of our hills. It is a matter of deep regret to think that these hills were always there, but they remained cut off from the rest of civilization and functioned merely as abodes for aboriginal tribes which resented intrusion at the hands of explorers or at best served as asylums for wild beasts to hibernate or again as sequestered corners for Sanyasins and Sadhus—our spiritual seekers—in search of the Absolute to patronise. The discovery of the hills brings to the forefront an important point relating to our existence.

The British perhaps for the first brought home to us the zest and the joy for life. The idea of the week-end away from the noise and smoke of London is a typical British institution. Similarly, the idea of a holiday in the hills in India again became a British institution with us, an idea with which we were by no means familiar. We have developed this idea and we hope that with the passage of time this tradition will be maintained in present-day India.

It is interesting to note that India even after Partition is blessed with hills of varying beauty, size and type in every part of the land. This Zonal distribution of hill-stations makes it in fact extremely convenient for local inhabitants to patronise the places of interest which are within geographical proximity without incurring heavy expenditure on travel, hotel accommodation and other incidentals. Thus in the North we have a range of hills from the glorious Kashmir and Kulu Valley to Simla, Mussoorie and Nainital. In the East, we have Darjeeling, Kurseong and Shillong. In the South,

Ootacamund—endearingly called Ooty—, Coonoor and Kodaikanal; in the West, Mahabaleshwar, Matheran and Lonavla tucked neatly in the Western Ghats on one side and Mount Abu in the Aravalli hills in the desert of Rajasthan.

The variety of life experienced in these hills is quite thrilling. If you want a gay time, song and dance, fun and frolic, pictures and theatres, the Northern Hills afford you greater chances of enjoyment. The Hotels are well-equipped to cater to your tastes in all these directions. The Nedous at Srinagar, the Savoy, the Hackmann's and to a lesser extent, Charleville in Mussoorie, the Cecil and Grand in Simla, the Metropole and the Royal in Nainital are hotels which provide not only excellent cuisine but also do their best to give you plenty of life in the premises of the Hotel itself. The Savoy at Mussoorie, for example, can boast of a good band, frequent dances in season, an excellent and well-equipped bar, a number of Tennis Courts (plus a Tennis Tournament), a Card-room, two billiard tables, two ping-pong tables. . . . the list is endless. If only they had a fairly well-equipped library too attached to the hotel, the picture would be complete.

If, however, you are adventurous and want to leave the beaten track, there is nothing to prevent you from getting it. The sight of snows from your hotel bedroom at Mussoorie may well kindle the wanderlust in your bosom. If so, all arrangements are possible and could easily be made to give you the necessary equipment, stores, personnel, animals etc. There are picturesque places beyond Naini, which you cannot miss. I don't mean places like Almora and Ranikhet but the Pindari Glacier itself.

Of course, all this needs a bit of roughing out and departing from the beaten track but then I am sure you will not mind it. After all, that is precisely what breaks the monotony of routine. If Babbitt is not to be King, and life has to have a thrill, which everyday existence

cannot provide, one must get away as often as is reasonably possible to haunts which inspire and which send you back to life, invigorated, a new person altogether. This is by no means a philosophy of escapeism which is being advocated but the only solution which makes life worth while. It is a 'must' for efficiency. And what could be more inspiring than the sight of misty mountains shawled in snow or gliding glaciers sprawled across the earth?

Perhaps we could go into some details about some of the important hill stations in the north of India. Let us start with Simla. This, as is well known, used to be the summer headquarters of the Government of India and the Government of the Punjab. A popular hill station in the lap of the Himalayas at an altitude of 7,100 ft. Simla has, by a number of circumstances, been associated with officialdom even to-day. Although the British are no longer with us, the old associations have lingered with us and Simla still retains its formal atmosphere which comes as a bit of a contrast when compared to places like Mussoorie and Nainital. That apart, it is a delightful place because of the panorama of the Himalayan snows which unfolds itself before your very eyes, as you approach Simla from Kalka by the rail-road. To the east of Simla lies Jakko (8,048 ft.) which is connected with the Observatory and Prospect Hills on the west by a long ridge. Near by is a wonderful health resort—Chota Simla—which again can be reached from Kalka by the mountain railway. There is no dearth of public conveyances, which are available at reasonable rates.

Among the best hotels that Simla can boast of, are: (1) Hotel Cecil, (2) Grand Hotel, (3) Hotel Metropole, (4) Corstorphen's Hotel. There are a number of clubs of which one could be a temporary member during the season should one so desire. Cinema houses like Rivoli, Regal and Ritz are available for entertainment. There is a Ballroom run by the Davico's. To visitors to Simla,

among the places of interest may be chiefly mentioned, the Viceregal Lodge, Elysium Hill, Prospect Hill, Observatory Hill etc. During the winter, when Simla is covered with snow, winter sports are encouraged and the entire panorama is reminiscent of the Swiss locale at its best in winter.

Turning further east, let us have a glance at Mussoorie. We have already mentioned the chief hotels which are a feature of Mussoorie. Perhaps we might mention in addition that this delightful hill station has even greater variety of amusements to offer to its visitors. Here again, public conveyances are numerous and rickshaws, dandies, ponies etc., are readily available. In addition, cars and buses ply from Dehra Dun to the motor terminus called Kinraig. Private cars are allowed to go upto the Library terminus. There are a number of Clubs in Mussoorie, particularly, the Mussoorie Club, Himalayan Valley Club and Happy Valley Club. Here again, membership is open to visitors coming to Mussoorie for short periods. Among the many places of interest may be mentioned the Mossy Falls, Kamptee Falls, Municipal Gardens, Barlow-ganj, to say but a few. Mussoorie abounds with entertainment. In addition to a number of cinema houses, there are a number of dance halls and skating rinks also provided to amuse visitors.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that Mussoorie because of its excellent climate has been chosen by the Labour Missionaries for providing Education to children from almost all parts of the world. The famous American-run Wood-stock school is situated in one of the best locales that could possibly be available in any part of India and provides a system of education which may well be the envy of Educationists anywhere else. The atmosphere of the school has to be seen to be believed.

A word about Nainital. There are several hill stations in India whose existence is generally associated with beautiful lakes. The same is the case with Naini-

tal. Unlike the lakes at Ooty and Kodai, this expanse of water has a distinct personality of its own, and Naini cannot be dissociated from the lake. Although the lake is only one mile long, the shortness of the distance is made up by the grandeur of the scenery and beauty provided. Here again, although officialdom visits Naini at frequent intervals, the atmosphere is entirely warm and informal. People go to Naini for the sheer fun of it, and to enjoy life. From Naini can be reached some of the most glorious spots like Ranikhet, Bhim Tal, Bhawali etc. Thus Naini functions as an important focal point.

The way to reach this idyllic spot is by bus service from the Railway station of Kathgodam. The distance between the rail-road and the hill station is only 22 miles. Mention may be made of some of the important hotels which are provided in European style in Nainital. They are principally: (1) Grand Hotel, (2) Hotel Metropole, (3) Royal Hotel. In addition, there are a good few run on Indian style viz. Naini Hotel, Empire Hotel. In Nainital as in other parts, there are famous clubs like: Naini Tal Club which provides yachting, rowing, polo and other sports. In addition there is the Naini Tal Yacht Club which often arranges Yacht racing and regattas during season. The principal interest naturally hovers round the lake. Most of the sports centre round skating and yachting. However, other forms of amusements e.g. dancing and Tennis are by no means conspicuous by their absence.

Mention may be briefly made of principal places of interest which are easily accessible from Nainital, for short excursions and picnics, particularly the Cheena Peak which is situated at a height of approximately 7,800 ft. and commands a beautiful view of the Himalayas as also of the plains. The Land's End and Tiffin Top are also worth a visit. Here again a number of picture houses give good film fare. Some of them are equipped with ball rooms and skating rinks, so that the

casual visitor can have a very good time, indeed.

Some of us staying in Bombay often cast envious eyes at distant Darjeeling. If one could negotiate the 1563 odd miles, the greater part of it in a hop by air from Bombay to Calcutta and the rest by the newly built Assam Link from Howrah via Katihar and Siliguri and then ascend the 7000 feet climb, it would definitely be worth all the trouble. Alternatively, the joy ride from Calcutta to Siliguri is a rare experience. The 51 mile Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway covering the bulk of its journey in dizzy zig-zags locally known as "Goomties" can keep you on your toes most of the time in ecstatic expectation of what follows at each bend and curve. The "Pugla Jhora"—the Mad Torrent—and Kurseong, the home of the white orchids, are important milestones in your journey. The less adventurous may well be satisfied with Kurseong, itself a delightful spot, with a climate which will buck you up no end and a panorama of nature which it will be difficult to surpass in the rest of India.

Darjeeling derives its name from two Tibetan words "Dorje" and "Ling" meaning the 'thunder-bolt' and 'a place' situated at the cross-road of two civilisations, the one Indian and the other Tibetan and is world famous for the magnificent sunrise across the snows of some of the highest peaks of the Himalayas, the Kanchinjunga range and the Mount Everest. The Tiger Hill and Sanchal afford these views. The place has a haunting beauty about it. The Abode of God Indra has a mystic charm woven round it. From no other place can one conveniently realise the colossal embodiment of silence which is the Himalayas. It is the grandeur and majesty of the beauty of nature confronting man and making him feel ever so insignificant.

Of course, there are the usual items of interest. The hotels are excellent—the Mount Everest, Bellevue and Carlton, for example. A few cinemas and a Natural History Museum welcome you with open arms. The

Tibetan new year commencing from the end of January and the Divali festival in the last week of October throw the spot light on Darjeeling. Weird devil dances and mystery plays are staged. Fun, fact and fantasy are often mingled to produce a cocktail which may be at once rib-tickling, riotous and horrifying spectacle. The Bazar Day provides amusing curios which may be bought as souvenirs. And as regards the hikes around the hills, the places are far too many to mention.

What then is the main beauty of this hill? Is the appeal to be confined to the magnificent sight of the snows which you can see from the top of the Observatory Hill? Or is it the atmosphere which greets one consequent upon the blending of various cultures, Indian, Tibetan and Nepalese? Or is it again the strangeness of the bazar scene or the quaint monasteries at Bhutia Busti, and Ghoom, or the variegated splash of colour which is observed in this land of flowers? Whatever may be the reason, the fact remains that Darjeeling provides a mystic charm which is difficult to beat in comparison with other hill stations in India.

A trip to Darjeeling would however be incomplete without a glance at Shillong. For Shillong is the heart of Assam and in Assam you will behold something of the wild west which is ever so much different from the rest of India. Perhaps the American boys who came to fight in the last world war have mentioned to you the unadorned beauty of the khasi women; perhaps the missionaries have whispered into your ears the head hunting pastime in which the uninhibited Nagas still occasionally indulge. Shillong is however a safe place and nothing very exciting is likely to happen during your peaceful sojourn in this salubrious climate.

For Shillong gives you the peace of the pinewoods at an altitude of 5000 feet. No railways disturb this table-land which is usually accessible from Pandu and Gauhati by road. A number of sports items like polo, golf, tennis and archery are here available. The Pine-

wood Hotel is likely to make you quite comfortable and sights like Ward's Lake, Beadon and Bishop waterfalls are likely to soothe your tired nerves. Remember: Shillong is one of the hills farthest from the heart of India. For many people living in Western India, it would be quite inaccessible. And yet, Shillong should be a 'must' in your itinerary for here is a facet of the wild life of India the like of which you may not come across easily in other parts of India. If you are a student of sociology, your interest will be unbounded in the tribal folklore of this province. Some people have found it a great wrench to get away from the haunting beauty of Assam.

Turning south, let us have a glance at Kodaikanal, popularly known as Kodai.

How do we reach Kodai?

Air travel, which has solved many a problem for the busy men of today who have limited leisure at their disposal, brings you to Madras very quickly from any part in India, whereafter it is a pleasant night's run to Kodaikanal to be climaxed by a 50-mile ride, thirty of which are spent in bated breath of what follows at each stage. The Ghat Section is particularly picturesque all the year round and innumerable taxi-buses ply throughout the day at extremely reasonable rates. And as the panorama unfolds itself gradually, any regrets which you may have otherwise felt will begin to wear off quite soon.

What struck me most was the sheer and bewildering kaleidoscopic variety of the place so far as its scenic beauty is concerned. In the morning, you woke up with brilliant sunshine and if you were a lover of Tennis or boating or long hikes, here was your ideal opportunity for, like the proverbial transitoriness of Indian life, the morning sun did not stay long. Soon there would gather a mist which would overwhelm the mountain tops, gracefully and subtly, like a shy maiden covering her face with a thin muslin veil. Even as the veil could be lifted by the slightest effort, so would the mist vanish

or be succeeded by heavy clouds. Sometimes there was thunder and some times a drizzle or a shower but nothing sustained. It came, and it passed, and anon you had the bright sun in its majesty. Just gave you a few glimpses of the various moods of nature.

Kodai is on the quiet side, yes, but not devoid of things to do and see. It has not been developed by man and just as well too. If you miss the bustle and sparkle of Mussoorie and Simla, you get amply repaid: the existence of a small but excellent Club, a number of places of interest to see, among them the most prominent being an Observatory on the Nandi Ginguparam Hill, 7688 feet above sea-level; beautiful falls such as Fairy Falls, Bear Shola Falls, and Silver Cascades; lovely picnic spots like Dolphin's Nose, Pillar Rocks, Pine Wood and Coaker's Walks, etc. The places are innumerable and your choice quite variegated. In addition, there is an excellent Boat Club which you can join at nominal rates; the boats are in excellent condition, and you can row at all times.

I must say so much of the fun of a holiday depends upon where you stay and what you eat and drink. If the place and its cuisine fail you, even nature may not respond on a gnawing stomach. My choice of the Carlton Hotel proved admirable in every respect. It is not always that one gets home comforts away from home which one always yearns for, more outside than when at home. To be given personal attention, and made comfortable and looked after—what more could one desire? The management at Carlton perform this function admirably, and endear themselves to their clientele with the result that one can't help going again and again, back to the same place. And talking of things to do, the Carlton run an annexe in the Season which provides you with an excellent restaurant, music and dancing every evening.

A word for the English Club and Golf Club at Kodai. Small clubs, but cosy, both physically and

otherwise, providing all amenities which one would like to have anywhere else on the surface of the earth. All Club games are provided, in addition an attractive little library, reading rooms, a dance floor and the inevitable hair-dresser who follows you like fate in every English Club. The atmosphere is extremely friendly and the new-comer is soon put completely at ease.

What about Ootacamund, popularly known as the Queen of the Hill Stations?

At the outset, we might mention that the Nilgiris cover a range of three hill-stations which are best known e.g. Coonoor, Kotagiri and Ooty. Pride of place must necessarily go to Ooty which has the chief sanatorium in Southern India. Situated on the Nilgiri plateau at a height of 7,500 ft., it is the headquarters of the Madras Government during the hot season. The variety of scenery provided necessarily makes it a very attractive spot for the rich business magnates of the South to build cottages and retire in Ooty. To the Englishman who was for long accustomed to his home climate, the 'downs' at Ooty provided a refreshing contrast from the atmosphere available in most of the plains in India and in the invigorating climate of the Nilgiris, he found a home away from his home. Even now there are a number of Englishmen settled down in Ooty.

The approach to Ooty is by a railway system which is remarkable for its ingenuity.

Ooty provides a number of good hotels like the Savoy Hotel, Hotel Cecil and for the more orthodox, the Modern Hindu Hotel and Modern Lodge. Of course there are a number of boarding houses available for those who prefer home comforts at reasonable rates. Here we have clubs like the Ootacamund Club, Ootacamund Gymkhana Club, Hunt Club etc. Among places of interest may be specially mentioned: (1) Government Botanical Gardens, (2) Doda-Betta which is the highest peak in the Nilgiris, (3) Pykara Hydro-Electric Scheme. There are picture houses, dance halls, and good restau-

rants galore in the place.

Coonoor has a more equable climate. It is neither hot in summer nor very cold in winter. The maximum temperature never exceeds 80° in summer. For people who find Ooty a little too cold particularly in winter and too wet in the monsoon, Coonoor is an ideal via media both for a casual visit as also for long stay. Most of the plantations of tea, coffee, potatoes and eucalyptus abound round about Coonoor and Kotagiri. Here again there are a number of good hotels run both on English and Indian style as also a good few places of entertainment.

Kotagiri situated at a height of 6,500 ft. from sea level has a population of about 8,000 people. It is 21 miles from Mettupalayam junction, 22 miles from Ooty and 14 miles from Coonoor. All the places round about Kotagiri are connected by good motor roads. One can, therefore, never feel isolated during one's stay at Kotagiri. Indeed, for a very quiet holiday when one wants to be far from the madding crowd, there will probably be few places to beat Kotagiri. Unfortunately, the hotel industry cannot possibly flourish well in Kotagiri.

We often ask: should the pride of place go to Kodai or Ooty?

A favourite question often asked but not always satisfactorily answered. There are odd attachments to places and an odder attempt to deride anything else except the place of your liking. The Kodai-wallahs maintain a pride for this little hill which is difficult to beat. When I asked a 90-year old lady of Kodai—by the way, you don't think of death in Kodai, only of life!—about the Nilgiris, she had only a brief sigh of derision to express for the land of the blue mountains. She would not leave this Shangri-la of her dreams—Kodai—for anything in the world. It is not a question of the Carlton at Kodai versus the Savoy at Ooty, or of Perumal versus Dodabetta. It is a question of sentiment; and yet there are dividing lines.

Kodai has a quiet charm, a sequestered beauty, a shyness which abhors intrusion. Ooty is relatively gay, fussy, sophisticated, refined. It invites you. It treads on your weaknesses. It knows that men—a great majority of them—do not always live on love, air and beauty of nature. It flashes restaurants and picture-houses at you. In season, even the equestrian and canine pleasures are not denied to you. So that Ooty is an unashamed vamp which does not mind exposing its charms to you because it knows that you will pay for them all right.

Kodai on the other hand is a shy maiden. It has virgin charms. Even the mist is shy as it covers the lake, then lifts and then comes on again. You cannot have shopping centres plunged in the heart of Kodai. You cannot even have a decent picture house. It will be against the spirit of Kodai. But you can have a tin shed. You cannot have a solid structure. In the hotel at Kodai most of the times the stairs creak but that notwithstanding the Carlton retains within its bosom a warmth and cheer which you cannot get in the Savoy at Ooty. Yet, in Kodai you have to be content with bare necessities. In Ooty, man has latterly played havoc with natural beauty.

What about the West?

The pride of place may perhaps be shared between Mahabaleshwar and Mount Abu. Both the places could however be improved with more enterprise. Let us first have a glance at Mt. Abu.

Mt. Abu, the 'hill of wisdom' known also as the Rajput Olympus and the play-ground of Gods owes its origin to a cow of the ancient sage of Vasistha which fell into an abyss and had to be rescued by Nandini. The Lord of Himalayas was asked to fill up the chasm into which the cow had fallen. Abruda, the mighty serpent undertook the task, provided his name was associated with the place. Hence, Abu, a contraction of the word Abruda—or so the legend says. Believe it or

not!

In Abu, attention is perforce focussed on the exquisite temples, which owe their existence to the genius of Vimala Sah, the merchant-prince-minister of Raja Bhim Dev I (1022-1063 A.D.) According to historical evidence, Vimala Sah had a passion for building temples and other architectural monuments. He had already indulged in the hectic activity of temple-building and dedicated a number of them to his ruling deity Parsvanath, which invited the wrath of the Goddess Ambika. It is stated that Ambika made her appearance to Vimala Sah in a dream and revealed to him that she would destroy all the temples which he had built so far, if he did not propitiate her own memory also. Hence the building of the stupendous Dilwara temple which used marble as the medium for building, a beautiful sop to a jealous goddess! No doubt the cost of building a temple of the dimensions of Dilwara must have been unlimited, more so when we consider the enormous problem of transporting marble to the site. However, nothing but marble was good enough for the irate Ambika and if Vimala Sah had to bleed a few dacoits in the bargain, he can be forgiven for it.

The main Dilwara temple consists of a sanctuary, a kind of nest hedged round by verdant hills and surrounded by beautiful scenery. There is considerable beauty within the forests of marble columns which are linked by toranas and exquisite creepers. No portion of the temple has been left incomplete and perhaps the most vigorous work of adornment has been done on the ceilings. There is a beautiful pendant in the centre of the dome and on the walls there are tales from Indian mythology with particular reference to Krishna, the Hindu Pan dancing on the snake demon Kaliya. Nor have the artists ignored the ideal of feminine beauty in the temples of Dilwara. They are distinctly of Jain style and therefore, normally bestowed with vigorous ideas of beauty. The Jain architects created spiritua-

lised sirens which also revealed exquisite forms of beauty. A fitting tribute has been given to this temple by critics ranging from Abbé Dubois to James Tod who wrote copiously about these temples. The Central Shrine of Vimala Sah contains an image of Adinath, one of the earliest of the Jain Tirthankars (holy teachers). An interesting pageant of the main temple is Hathi Khana or Elephant Room. There is a corridor of 52 cells and each recess contains the figure of a Tirthankar gazing into infinity with bejewelled eyes.

After Vimala Sah came two famous brothers, Vastupala and Tejapala—vassals of Bhim Dev II (1178-1241) who had a passion for building magnificent and beautiful temples and their contributions are 'almost unrivalled even in the land of patient and lavish labour', which India can boast of. 'Of the temples, altars, pools, groves that have been constructed by the two brothers, their number is not known and the earth can alone tell', so says the historian of the time. According to Tod, the pendant building appears like a cluster of the half-disclosed lotus, whose cups are so thin, so transparent, and so accurately wrought that it fixes the eye in admiration. There is a colossal black figure of Nemnath, another Jain Tirthankar built by the brothers as a tribute to their generous enthusiasm. It is recorded in history that the workmen were paid by the results of the amount of marble dust accumulated. Hence the lacelike texture of tracery to which marble was whittled down to shell-like transparency.

Perhaps the most interesting shrine built in the vicinity is that of Valmiki Rishi. There is a nearby monument known as Kunwari Kanya. History records that this sage developed a passion for a girl whose parents were averse to the idea of giving her up in marriage. The mother put up an impossible proposition and told the sage that if he could build a long road over the hills of Abu in the course of a single night, she would give her daughter to him in marriage. Val-

miki Rishi started building the road with supernatural powers and had almost completed the job towards the dawn. The mother was however still unwilling to part with her daughter and she resorted to an underhand subterfuge. Impersonating as a cock, she gave a shrill crow in the early hours of the morning which disturbed the Rishi in his work. When, however, the plot was revealed to him, he cursed both the mother and the daughter.

The motorable road from Abu Road to Mt. Abu is a 35-mile pleasurable drive amidst beautiful scenery all throughout. Once in the playground of the Gods, the visitor is amply repaid. For however unbearable the heat on the plains, the breezes on Mt. Abu will soon lull you into a sweet slumber. The summer months are good for a visit to this hill, though personally I would recommend the period immediately following the monsoon. There is a freshness in the air at the end of September and in the beginning of October which makes most hill stations in India quite heavenly. Mt. Abu is no exception!

Although situated at a height of only 2,000 ft. and therefore, not particularly attractive from the climatic point of view, Matheran provides adequate escape to the tired business man in Bombay who needs the quickest holiday in the shortest possible time. For Matheran is a pretty little capsule of delight, such minor nuisances as mosquitoes and monkeys notwithstanding. Unfortunately there is no direct approach to Matheran which deprives it of a considerable amount of interest. Schemes are afoot for providing a rope way to Matheran. This is likely to attract more tourists to Matheran. At the present moment, the rail journey provides endless fun to the visitors. Toy railways are popular all over the world and Matheran is no exception. Some of the enterprising folks bring their cars upto Neral and then climb the hill either by foot or on horse-back.

Matheran abounds in a number of interesting

places. Among the well-known are the Panorama Point from which one can command one of the finest views in the Bombay State. While there is a sheer drop of some 15,00 ft. right in front of you, on the left can be seen the Bombay Harbour and the open sea. Another important point which the visitors must see is Porcupine Point so called "because the actual rock has a strong physical resemblance to the porcupine". Here again, a view of the Bombay Harbour comes into prominence. A delightful walk leads us to the Louisa point. Besides these, there are any number of points which one can usefully visit in Matheran.

A good many hotels are available at Matheran. Chief mention may be made of Rugby Hotel and Lord's Hotel which cater in European style. There are also good hotels run on Indian lines viz. the Regal Hindu Hotel, Laxmi Hindu Hotel, Royal Hotel etc. Luxuries are available at reasonably cheap rates. There are certain features of this hill station which are particularly of interest to the Bombaites. Accommodation is cheap and suits all purses. The climate is cool and salubrious. Telephone service is available at low rates. It is within about 4 hours reach from Bombay. Many people wish to reach even quicker.

A word about the twin health resorts of Lonavla and Khandala, almost a stone's throw from Bombay, for week end trips from Bombay which are very popular for residents in and around Bombay. Situated on the South-East Section of the Central Railway, these two places, only two miles apart, stand perched on the top of the Bhore Ghat at an elevation of just about 2000 ft. A number of small hotels and bungalows cater to the needs of would-be visitors in season whereafter the place goes back to its even tenor of life. The Duke's Nose and Byramji Point in Khandala, the Tiger's Leap, the Valvan and Bhushi Lakes in Lonavla attract a number of picknickers every week-end.

The piece-de-resistance of Lonavla, about six miles



NAINITAL: *Flats from Mid-Chuma*

SHILLONG: *A view of the Lavan village*





DILWARA: Mt. Abu

Hill station that abounds in architectural grandeur

distant are the famous Buddhist Karli Caves, a remarkable example of rock-cut architecture dating from 2nd century B.C. The shrine has been chiselled out of the solid rock in the form of a great cathedral with nave, altar, side separated from the body of the structure by rows of mammoth pillars, vaulted roof and balcony. A number of exquisitely carved columns run the length of the Chamber on either side. There are seven pillars at the back of the stupa or mound, shaped like the one originally built to enshrine the relics of the Buddha. If you are a student of Indian religion and architecture, you would linger much longer at Karli. But, let us pass on!

Mahabaleshwar is perhaps an excellent compromise between a hill station that is really cold like Kodai or one that is just cool like Matheran. The height is 4500 feet. Some people consider this as just ideal! It is a very popular health resort particularly for people staying in the Bombay State. There are various ways of reaching Mahabaleshwar. The most orthodox one is to go by train upto Poona and then take the newly installed de luxe state transport from Poona to Mahabaleshwar, which should reach you within less than $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours, nicely in time for a hearty lunch if you have left early in the morning. Some people prefer to travel from Poona to Wathar also by train which incidentally shortens the road trip. April and May are the best months for a visit to Mahabaleshwar or again during Christmas time. The rains are rather unkind to Mahabaleshwar. There is a variety of good hotels available at Mahabaleshwar. The Race View and the Frederick Hotel are definitely good and can be safely recommended. According to the latest reports, food is abundant and wholesome and a good holiday is easily assured.

The association of Shivaji, the Hindu idol of chivalry and romance with Mahabaleshwar is inevitable. For round about Poona and this hill are interspersed a number of hill fortresses, impregnable once upon a time.

from which Shivaji, the mountain-rat of history, then symbolic of an anti-imperialist campaign against the mighty Moghuls, dashed forth. Shivaji and his war veterans swept everything before them. Pratapgarh, Raigarh and Pandargarh are not mere abodes of brick, mortar and stone. There is history writ large on each stone wall. There is life in them!

That apart, Mahabaleshwar boasts of a number of other sights which the tourist cannot afford to miss! The hill abounds in interesting buildings and monuments such as the old Government House, the Beckwith Monument, the Church Square etc. There are a number of temples such as the Krishna Temple and the Mahabaleshwar Temple. Also a number of fascinating points which afford a beautiful sight, the principal ones being Elphinstone Point, Castle Rock, Hunter Point and so on. There are also a number of interesting water falls in and around Mahabaleshwar.

You will be sorry to leave this lovely little place and you will cast many a longing look behind when the time comes to board the waiting taxi!

So far as some of our hill-stations are concerned, there is a feature which is of interest to the railwaymen in India. The Light Hill railways which connect some of our hills with the plains have taxed the ingenuity of our engineers and afforded infinite amusement to our tourists. Particular mention may, in this connection, be made of the Kalka-Simla hill railway, Silliguri-Darjeeling railway, Mettupalayam-Ootacamund railway and the Matheran Light railway. The problem of reaching the hills was always considered a formidable barrier in the days of long ago. To the credit of the Englishman may, however, be said that he not only explored the hills for us but took the initiative of making them habitable. This could never have been possible but for building good railroads and motorable roads. Where the terrain is difficult, good roads have been built and road transport alone solves the problem of accessi-

bility. Wherever possible, delightful railways have been constructed.

Particular mention may be made in this connection of the approach to Simla and Darjeeling. Gradients and curves in both these places make any rail transport extremely hazardous and call for the highest technical engineering skill in building track, providing bridges and tunnels and guarding the rail-road during periods of rain, snow and land-slides. The famous "Goomties" on the Silliguri-Darjeeling railway are far too well-known. The average steepness of the gradient on this railway is 1 in 25 which often rises to 1 in 20. Several deviations have to be made and of course from the tourist point of view, the picturesque loops and bends add materially to the interest and beauty of the journey.

On the Mettupalayam-Ootacamund section there is a special feature worth mentioning. This length of rail-road has been provided with a device in the centre of the gauge consisting of a pair of rack bars mounted on the cross sleepers, into which a pair of special cog wheels, fitted in the locomotive, engage while running on it. This prevents slipping down of the train during its run up or down the steep track. The locomotives working on this railway are also of special type and provided with two cog wheels worked by steam, which engage the two rack bars. This feature is not observed in any other hill-railways in India.

Nearer home, we have from Neral to Matheran a small hill railway only 12.61 miles in length on a 2 ft. gauge with a ruling gradient of 1 in 20 compensated.

There are endless facets to our hill-stations in India. The type of scenery observed is variegated in the extreme. The hills have a strange fascination for us which can perhaps only be satisfied by going to them.

CHAPTER II

ON BEAUTIFUL BEACHES

COMING down from Bombay, let us now have a quick survey of some of India's beauty spots on the coast-line and see what they have to show us.

To have an idea of the quaintness of a place, perhaps there is no better experience than a visit, if even for a short time, to a coastal town called Karwar, which is situated a few miles south of Goa. Small coastal boats of Scindia's, tiny as tonnage goes but otherwise extremely well-equipped and furnished run regular trips from Bombay to Cochin, halting at Goa, Karwar and Mangalore en route. Alternatively you can go to Karwar by road via Hubli and Dharwar both of which are on the Metre Gauge section of the Southern Railway on the Poona-Bangalore route. By sea, the distance from Bombay to Karwar is only 270 miles. During the monsoons, however, the boat trip would not be advisable. The services are often suspended. The rail-cum-road route involves a long car or bus ride from Hubli to Karwar. But then the scenic effects are charming most of the time and the journey is not boring at any stage.

Karwar is a typical small coastal town which gives you the spirit of the Konkan. Industrially not very developed, it carries on trade in such items as timber, fisheries, carpentry etc. The coastline of Karwar is a sheer beauty. If you are fond of swimming, sea-bathing, fishing and shikar, Karwar will give you ample opportunities and you will be fully occupied. There is a fairly good hotel—the Grand—which gives you personal attention and is quite in keeping with the rural atmosphere of the place. The Officers' Club is within reasonable proximity and most of the club games are provided. If you go to the Hotel and you so desire it, you can get

automatically and immediately enrolled as a member of the club during your short stay. The atmosphere is charming and friendly and you will soon be put completely at ease. They love strangers; the tourists are welcome and are made quite comfortable.

There are a few interesting sights in and around Karwar which you cannot miss. The Oyster Rocks off the coast are a unique thing and the perennial Devgad Lighthouse keeps constant vigil on Karwar. Kurngad, a nearby island and Sadashivgad Fort are worth a visit. So is the Government Timber Depot at Kodibag. Perhaps you may not find time for all these. Here is an opportunity for you to roam at your sweet will and get lost in rural India. For once, you are not likely to be pestered by any guides anxious to show you around. To see the people at work, the fishermen and women particularly, to observe their passionate devotion to the job which gives them livelihood, to study their manners, customs, ways of life—this is a fascinating pursuit! You are not likely to regret your trip to Karwar!

Before we go down from Karwar to the lazy land of Malabar, we may halt for a while at Mangalore. This again is not a big place as such and yet we would like you to have a glance at it. As you go down south, particularly along the coast line, you will find a curious blending of cultures, the one foreign and the other indigenous and the influence of Christianity on the people is apparent. Centuries back, waves of visitors came to our coastal places. While trade was the primary purpose, religious fervour walked in its wake. Missionary zeal was often pronounced. It has left interesting traces behind. It is still at work, even today.

The Catholics all over the world regard Mangalore as the Rome of the East, on account of its being an important limb of the Diocese. Here you will find the Konkani and the Christian cultures in close juxtaposition to each other. That apart, Mangalore is an interesting town for several reasons. At one stage in the

history of the Vijayanagar Empire, South Kanara was a famous centre and Mangalore enjoyed a pride of place. Students of history and archaeology will promptly point their fingers to such ancient glories as those of the Jaina temples at Moodabidri, Venoor and Karkala, all masterpieces of ancient architecture. The 50-feet solid rock-cut image of Shri Gamtेशwara is reckoned as a marvel even today.

Then again, Mangalore has a considerable amount of commercial and industrial importance. It is the biggest centre for the manufacture of tiles, for coffee-curing, cashew-nut roasting industry. There is a good hotel—the Minerva, along with a number of Dak Bungalows belonging to the P.W.D. and the Railways. There are a number of interesting gardens like the Coronation and the Municipal Gardens, the Kadri Hills with caves, the Sulthan Battery which you should see. Above all, the sea with its buzzing activity will have you enthralled.

To see Malabar and die would not be an inappropriate variant on the old theme of Naples. Once you see Malabar, there is the will to live in it till eternity. There are places which get into your bloodstream insidiously, by habit or by constant visit or by association. Malabar grips you immediately and then you dare not get away from it in a hurry and if you do, there is the dread certainty that you will come back to it sooner than you expected. To that extent, it reminds you of falling in love at first sight without the attendant trepidations involved in that state. Malabar has a haunting fascination about it.

Maybe it is the sheer picturesqueness of the panorama around you. If you are near the sea as you usually are, you are constantly being wafted by the languorous sea breezes. There is a narcotic perfume in the air. It soothes you. It dulls your senses and you feel like the lotus-eater. Why should life all labour be, you echo listlessly? The palm-fringed, water-logged back waters and lagoons beckon to you. Acre after acre is planted

with rice, tapioca and the cocoanut. Nature could not have been more bountiful and more pretty, except perhaps in some parts of Ceylon.

How do you reach this tropical paradise? Simple enough if you are in Bombay or for the matter of fact, anywhere else in India. The Indian Airlines take you on a thrice-weekly flight to Cochin within a few hours. An itinerary of Cochin, Trivandrum and Cape Comorin with a few adjacent places thrown in should be a good idea. Alternatively, we can take you to Madras and thence by air to Coimbatore, Cochin and Trivandrum. If you want to go to North Malabar first, you should go by train from Madras to Calicut, Cannanore and Mangalore, or by Scindia's steamers from Bombay to Mangalore and thence to Cochin. The air trip is the easiest as it saves considerable time and bother and is relatively not so expensive either, the fares from Bombay to Cochin being only Rs. 150. By the way, you could hop into the Nilgiris also if you so desire it.

The west coast is admirably well served by hotels. Spencers, ubiquitous by their presence in the South, have a beautiful haunt, the Malabar Hotel, situated right on the sea-front on top of the Willingdon Island. The first approach to the Hotel from the station via the sea is reminiscent of Venice. A motor launch meets you on arrival. And once within the portals of the hotel, as you sip your chhota peg relaxing in the lounge—Cochin is not dry—and hear the murmur of the waves, the lilt-ing music of the Malabari fisherman on the sea, with the palm fringed vista of the old Cochin town before you, you may for once forget the cares of the world and dream. The hotel itself has a lovely bar, a good swimming pool, a couple of motor launches always at your disposal at reasonable rates and you should, as a rule be out of the hotel on the sea front after dinner, with someone by your side. An unforgettable experience if the moon chooses to oblige.

Nor are Cochin Town and Ernakulam devoid of

interest. Cochin Town itself is old and decrepit in parts. There are relics of Vasco da Gama's visit—his house, for example—and a Jewish synagogue which is rich in architectural splendour. The interest is however antiquarian and historical. There is a musty atmosphere about the place which might momentarily make you feel trifle uncomfortable. But then if you turn on to the European quarter and then move to the beach, you will have no cause to complain. The beach despite the presence of fishermen around you is picturesque and sea-bathing pleasant and exciting. See that you don't get caught in the fisherman's net or slip on the slimy fish! A visit to the naval establishments in Willingdon Island is worthwhile and the harbour itself is usually a bee-hive of activity. Cochin port is gradually being expanded and in years to come, it is bound to become more and more important commercially.

Perhaps the most picturesque part of your trip should begin now. You could do it in a rapid hop—Cochin to Trivandrum by air. It takes only a few minutes. I would, however, advise you to linger a little. Time in Malabar has not much significance. The tempo of life since ages has been in tune with the slow-moving dinghy on the sea. There is no mad hurry of life here. A boat ride from Cochin to Alleppy—preferably in a private motor launch—on a moonlight night should be tried out. Then a day in Allepy and thence by road to Quilon and by train to Trivandrum. The changes are slightly tedious but then it is worthwhile. You will get through a kaleidoscopic variety of vegetation and verdure which you are not likely to forget in a hurry. The train journey from Quilon to Trivandrum holds you enthralled.

At Trivandrum again The Mascot, now no longer run by Spencers serves you adequately unless of course you would prefer to stay away in one of the Public Retiring Rooms at Trivandrum Station itself, which are

quite neat, cheap and well-equipped. Trivandrum is, however, dry at the moment. But there are compensations. The Hotel itself contains 17 rooms with upto-date fittings—11 single and 6 double rooms. The food is excellent, the rooms well-equipped—each double room has two separate baths and showers—a beautiful Art Gallery and Chitrallyam—are at close hand, the State Zoo is worth a visit. The Hotel itself has ample grounds and good gardens and is in reasonable proximity both to the Railway station and the aerodrome. The Office of the Indian Air Lines Corporation is next door and reasonably good and cheap taxis are always available.

A few miles out of the city is the fascinating Arabian Sea waiting to welcome you. The beach is lovely, clean and inviting. Your first impression is one of sheer breadth. It has a tremendous sweep. Sea-bathing should be a must. If you are interested in marine life and fish, a museum and an aquarium will amuse you no end. And perhaps if you desire to get away to a more sylvan spot, I would recommend Kovalam. One would think that Shakespeare conceived his "A Mid Summer Night's Dream" in the wooden glory of Kovalam.

Perhaps you are religious. In that case, you should visit Shri Padmanabha Temple particularly at evening time. A myriad oil-lamps play on this temple when it is dusk. Unfortunately, an atmosphere of orthodoxy pervades the place. Only true Hindus are admitted in the inner folds of Shri Padmanabha. This, however, does not prevent you from appreciating the architectural beauties of the place.

However, let us move on to the land where the three seas converge in one astonishing sweep. The approach to the Cape Comorin is along a perfect stretch of 56-mile long metalled dustless road. The confluence of the three seas is a sight for the gods to behold. Here you reach quite literally the southern-most tip of the great sub-continent of India. There is a good State Hotel at

Cape Comorin, ideally situated on the sea front, which can accommodate you at reasonable rates. The food and service are not quite first class but as your stay at the Cape is not likely to be prolonged, you would not notice the monotony in food. Besides the compensations are numerous.

Of course, the beach is wonderful. The natural rocks make bathing and changing easy. The walks on the sands are a delight. And there is nothing to beat the sunrise and the sun-set at the Cape. We were favoured with the latter but not the former. A cloudy morning can spoil things a bit.

The term Cape Comorin itself has a legendary background, derived from Kanya Kumari, the eternal virgin goddess. According to ancient lore, the high and mighty Shiva himself proposed marriage to the goddess and was accepted. Unfortunately, Shiva proved a late Latif and the bride would have none of him. When at last the all-powerful Shiva did emerge, the goddess remained adamant despite furious protestations, and chose to remain a virgin for the rest of her life.

There is a beauty about the Cape which is hard to translate in words. Nature in its immensity often exalts the human spirit and sometimes overawes man! People have experienced mixed feelings when confronted by the snowy abode of the Gods in the Himalayas. Immensity of the oceans before you with not an inch of land can be a staggering experience, which can also be very inspiring. At night, the Cape if the moon is not full and sadly waning can put on a weird mantle and if your ears are tuned, you may yet detect the sigh of the Virgin Goddess waiting for her unpunctual lover on the sandy beach of the Cape or hear the sad melody of the anklets worn around her weary, laden limbs.

Yes, Malabar is a land of languorous beauty. It distils charm, a way of life which we in the cities, even in India, are fast losing, which you from the West are likely to appreciate all the more and to which you would

like to revert as and when it becomes possible for you to do so. By all means see Malabar. You may avoid the monsoons as nature is in a furious mood for four months of the year. Otherwise, I am sure you will not regret it.

After we leave Madras and before we reach Puri and Gopalpur we might halt for a day or so at Waltair, "the Brighton of the East" as it is sometimes called. Waltair and Vizagapatam—two miles away!—are like twin brothers, the one an important focal point for the Railways and the other the most important port of the Andhras on the Coromandal coast, next in importance only to Madras, which is assiduously being developed as a modern port almost every day. At Vizag, as it is generally known, we have the only ship-building yards of India and the Scindias' have done useful work for this pioneer industry. The port lies in a bay formed by a headland known as the Dolphin's Nose. Vizag also boasts of a first class Tuberculosis Sanatorium as the climate is considered to be extremely pleasant almost throughout the year. The Beach and the Sea View Hotel cater to the needs of visitors. A fine specimen of the Orissan architecture is the beautiful hill temple of Simhachalam. Waltair is also famous for the manufacture of Panjam cloth and ornamental articles of ivory, buffalo-horn and silver filigree. The beach is a beauty and the residents take full advantage of it.

Going further up, what about Puri, the land of Jagannath? Here, the Railways take you in hand. For the old BNR Hotel on the sea front still holds its own and there is nothing to compete with it, in or around Puri. The situation is ideal, the sea-breeze enervating, it lulls you to sleep after a good tuck-in of fish-curry and rice nor are you likely to rise with the dawn, for though the sun is up early, there is still the music of the waves in your ears and the breezes have been blowing so softly and so soothingly that you are likely to feel lazy, more so if you visit Puri in the months preceding the Mon-

soons. The Hotel has a number of rooms—single and double—mostly facing the sea. They are well furnished and the modern appurtenances have not been lost sight of. The bath rooms here as also at Gopalpur which I visited next, could be improved upon a little. The food served was good, wholesome and abundant, with a surfeit of fish thrown in. Puri is dry at the moment, so if you feel thirsty, you have to make a bee-line for neighbouring Gopalpur which has got a special licence and a well-stocked cellar. The Hotel has a Tennis court attached, a lugubrious bar which doles out lemon squash and orange squash which few people patronise, a good billiard table and a lounge with a few magazines and books thrown in. The management is in good hands at the moment and the young executive in charge spares no pains in making your stay as pleasant as possible. You appreciate his personal attention.

For the visiting tourist, Puri is synonymous with the sea and Jagannath. The one cleanses your body and the other your soul. For the visitor to Puri, both are indispensable. The beach at Puri is a delight although you are likely to lose your balance if your chassis is weak. But then, take heart because you have experts on the beach all the time and they are quite willing to oblige you at any time of the day—or night! The sun rise and the sun set are equally fascinating sights on Puri beach. The sun rising has often been likened to a 'blood red disc lying tucked under the sheets of the deep blue water, suddenly sprouting over the sea surface.' As regards the growling, angry, roaring sea, well, I guess we will have to put up with it. It takes a little time to be friendly. But once it relents it will be like the friend of a life time. About the efficacy of a perambulatory visit to Jagannath, I will not dilate here.

Among hotels, perhaps the pride of place may be given to the Oberoi's Hotel at Gopalpur-on-Sea. Gopalpur, accessible from a small way-

side station called Behrampore on the East coast by a motorable road of about 10 miles is a small fishing village. It is secluded, quiet, shy of intrusion; a sleepy little microcosm, a world within itself which does not like to be disturbed by the passing waves of civilisation. It is ideally suited alike for the honeymooner and the spiritualist, the writer and the painter, all of whom are perhaps reasonably near to God, who would like to escape the illusion of existence and to taste the nicotine of nirvana or again to dive within and recollect in tranquillity what would otherwise be impossible in a world of confusion and noise. Except for the lapping of the waves and the drone of the black beetle, they are not likely to be disturbed by man or nature!

This is no reflection on the hotel itself which attempts to provide all the amenities which make life worthwhile. The cuisine—an abundance of fish notwithstanding—is good and there is a bar attached to the hotel, the sparkling cheeriness of which will generally succeed in dispelling all blues—and as regards company, that will depend entirely on you. When I entered the dining room, I saw eight couples seated around, *all* white—a repetition of my experience in Puri. We are still a little chary about spending money on hotels. With the passage of time, we are bound to grow out of this mentality. But then the crowd was extremely friendly, there was always a smile on your neighbour's face and soon eschewing formalities and introductions, we got down to fixing up a match for tabletennis or tennis. Oh! yes, the hotel provides both. It is, however, desirable to give a little notice of your arrival and indicate your requirements in advance. Remember: there are no shopping centres at Gopalpur and you have to be more or less self-sufficient so far as your every-day wants go. Of course, if you stay long in Gopalpur, you will learn to do without many things altogether. Which is one of the things India has to teach. The secret of happiness

does not lie in multiplying wants!

The sandy beach is definitely the best part of Gopalpur. The sea is often rough, the waves sometimes being as truculent as the tongue of a woman. If you are deficient in total tonnage and lacking in avoirdupois, you are likely to be swept off your feet by the turbulent sea. Of course, there are expert swimmers—who will always give you a helping hand. Surf riding is another experience which you can acquire here if you are not unduly nervous. And then nothing like lying on the sands, tucked cosily under a rude bamboo structure which is erected in your honour—five rupees only, sir!—payable in advance!

Such are some of our places on the sea. There are many more. Perhaps you would like to explore them yourself without my having to tell you about them. Just as well. But by now, you would have had some indication of life in the coastal towns of India. That too is a facet of life you might know.

Let us now turn on to something entirely different.

CHAPTER III

SOME PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE

WE will now tell you something about our temples. Temples are inevitable in India. You have to know something about them. Maybe our choice is entirely arbitrary. We have selected in this Chapter four great temples in four corners of India: Hardwar in the North, Puri in the East, Rameshwaram in the South and Somnath in the West. There are many more temples in all parts of India, some of which more exquisite and architecturally more important; yet, these four are typical and each one has a great interest in the annals of our history. Before we have an excursion round these temples, we may tell you a few words about our religious ideals.

You have, no doubt, been quite shocked—sometimes deeply touched—by some of the things which you have so far seen. If you have escaped into the hills and beaches of India, it is time you came down and saw something which is wonderfully elevating for the soul and yet somewhat depressing to the mind! You who have come from the West will probably wonder at the nearnude Sanyasis besmeared with ashes walking about the streets of Hardwar, with no one being any the wiser. If you look closely, you will find some of them sitting and sleeping on beds of nails. You will find them absorbed in the ecstasy of religion, in what we call Samadhi, when the body becomes inert and stiff while man is lost in contemplation. You will see a lot of the seamy side around temples: poverty, begging for alms, seething masses of humanity at various stages of disease, penury and spiritual exaltation clustering around you. Bear with us for some time and you may be able to sift

the truth. The discovery of the spirit that is India will be your job. Only then will your visit be worth it!

Remember a few things about us. Some of them have already been clarified by the Western scholars who have really understood us. Thus Max Muller: "If I were asked under what sky the human *mind* has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply wondered on the greatest problems of life and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention of even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India." The key to India is its religion. Religion here is no ordinary thing. It is the frame work of daily life. Here is humanity truly 'steeped in divinity'. As another European scholar has pointed out, in India, 'each one sees God, hears God and is a part of God and lives in God every minute of his life'. It is idle to assign reasons. But this is true from Vedic times and the four important Vedas were composed—does it very much matter if we assign dates?—shall we say between 1500-1000 B.C. Man in the first dawn of civilisation is depicted as being in tune with Nature and at the same time feeling really dwarfed by it. The torrential rains, the menacing clouds, the terrible thunderbolts, all had a profound effect on man, unaided as he was by art and science. Hence came the insistence on the transitoriness of life, of 'the ephemeral play of shadows', of the sheer impermanence of everything and the concept of Maya, of illusion and the idea of a higher Reality, call it God, call it by any other name you like. Then came Mahavira and his emphasis on the absolute sanctity of life in the shape of Ahimsa, followed by the lyrical notes of Buddha, 'the man who has woken up'. Centuries have rolled by but the basic concepts of Hinduism have not died down. And under the influence of each different religion, we built a stupa, a temple, a monastery, in every nook and corner of the earth. A great many of those monuments have stood the test of time. We might therefore ask: have these temples any



BHUBANESHWAR

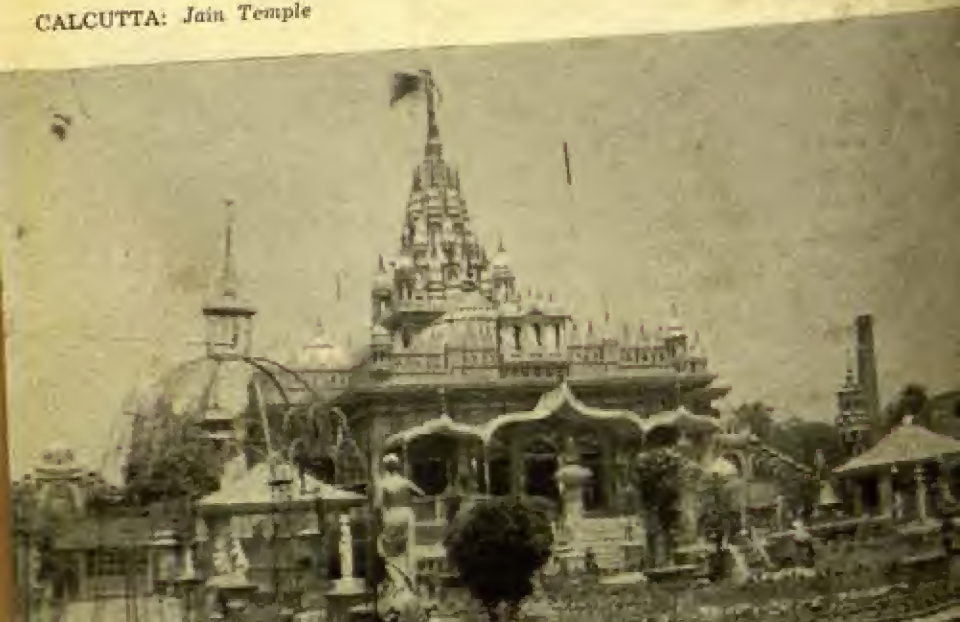
KHAJURAHO: *Khandariya Temple*





NASIK TEMPLE

CALCUTTA: *Jain Temple*



message to impart?

Of course, they have. For, the rock, the hill, the tower are all symbolic of eternity. We did not build in vain. The temples are the language of the spirit and the spirit is undying! Even the normal structure of the temple was symbolic of man. The great mast at the entrance symbolised the creative principle and infinite stress has been laid on it in our life. The temple court was the human lungs; the Holy of Holies, the innermost of the shrines, the *mulaasthanam* as it was called, was the heart. Each temple was a focal point of considerable religious force and it radiated its influence far and wide. In fact, in India, in almost every little hamlet, there would be a small temple.

Nor were the inner decorations void of symbolism. We often find a mass of decorative motifs on every pillar, on each ceiling. The animal motif is often paramount. We might ask: Why? The answer is that there was always a method in our madness. The horses for example, stood for our senses. The chariot was representative of the mind, usually in motion, difficult to curb and control; the elephants were symbolic of the earth, the material body and all that it stood for. The Naga, the serpent, on the other hand, stood for wisdom. Garuda was the emblem of the cycle of evolution which liberates man from future births. The Lotus, the most popular and profoundly meaningful of all symbols, stood for Man himself. Its roots—matter!—are steeped in mud, its stem stands for emotions and passions which assail one almost incessantly, the flower was the soul of man. Need we go on?

So all roads in India lead to the thousands of temples, big and small which have been erected by man. Shall we have a closer view?

We might start with Hardwar nestled cosily in the lap of the Himalayas.

A word about the choice of this place. Some of my friends would prefer me to talk of Bhadrinath and

Kedarnath as being the Holy of Holies for a visit. It is no use disputing the sanctity of any of these places. Bhadrinath and Kedarnath are much more picturesque if trifle inaccessible even today. There was a time when a pilgrimage to these places about 200 miles North of Hardwar was really fraught with dangers. Today, motor transport has brought them within easy reach and barring the last lap of the journey of about 45 miles which has to be done by foot or on pony-backs, the rest is easy going. A number of Dak Bungalows, Rest Houses and Bazars are provided at convenient stages and you may do the journey at a leisurely jaunt, if you are in no particular hurry. On the other hand, the journey is still quite strenuous and the type of amenities which you might have been used to are conspicuous by their absence. Religious fervour and nature's lavish charms are all right—but, then we have to respect practical considerations also. Hence, my choice of Hardwar for you and a hop to adjoining places like Rishikesh, Lachhman Jhoola and Swargashram which are all within close proximity.

Hardwar has enjoyed particular sanctity because following ancient tradition, this is one of the four places marked for holding what is termed as the Kumbh Mela which takes place every three years at Nasik, Ujjain, Allahabad, in addition to Hardwar. Thus each one of them gets a turn every 12 years for the great Mela. When the Planet Jupiter is in Aquarius and the Sun enters the Aries, that is the time for the holding of the Kumbh Mela. In January-February of 1954 we celebrated one of the most successful of these events when large masses of humanity had a dip in the holy confluence of the three rivers at Allahabad known as the Triveni. Elaborate police, security, law and order, railways and traffic arrangements were made and according to modest estimates about a good few lakhs of people congregated at the time.

Hardwar, literally, the gateway of Hari or God

Vishnu, commands a magnificent position, at the mouth of a gorge, at the foot of the Siwalik range of mountains, with the sacred river Ganges flowing into several channels through the town. The town is believed to be one of considerable antiquity. Known originally as Kapila, possibly as the seat of Saint Gupila who spent many years of his life there, according to recorded history, it was visited by the Chinese Pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang. The charm of Hardwar lies in its bathing ghats. The Har-ki-pairi is a place of great sanctity for the feet of God are impressed in stone and on the right day of the year, the first day of the month of Baishakh according to the Hindu calendar, a regular battle royal ensues among the inspired devotees, each one claiming the special privilege of being the first to have a plunge in the pool, so as to wash off all his previous sins and earn the right of claiming eternal salvation. Faith can do wonderful things. It can even cause loss of lives in the bargain. As the result of experience gained of frenzied demonstrations of zeal, the steps on the Ghats have been widened. Even so, accidents will occur! By the way, don't dream of sporting your camera around on these occasions. There is a law against it. The writer nearly had his Brownie confiscated!

The pride of Hardwar is the temple Daksheswara. There is a touching legend woven around this place. According to ancient lore, Gangadwara is the scene of Daksha's great sacrifice to which he invited all and sundry but not his great son-in-law Lord Shiva, nor his consort Parvati. While Shiva kept his mouth shut, Parvati could not brook the insult and much to her husband's chagrin, insisted on attending the function and going to her father's place uninvited. She was received with a cold shoulder. Smitten with anger, and unable to stand the humiliation, she went to the bank of the Ganges and 'by her own splendour consumed her body'. Shiva then let loose the thunder-bolts of his wrath, he produced Vira-Bhadra who cut off Daksha's head and

flung it in the fire. Shiva brought back Daksha to life but since his head had already been consumed by fire, he substituted it by that of a goat's head. The spot where Daksha prepared the great sacrifice is known as the temple of Daksheswara.

Of Hardwar, Havell has said: "The most sacred places of Buddhist and Hindu India are those where a mountain torrent pours over a scarp of rock curved like the crescent moon on Shiva's brow, reminding the pious pilgrim of the Holy Ganges as she descends into the plains of India at Hardwar over Himalayan wooded precipices—the tangled locks of the Great Yogi of Kailas, who represents the Brahmanic ideal of the Enlightened One."

Coming to things more mundane, while arrangements at the station itself both for board and lodge are adequate, while transport is good and reasonable, Hardwar does not boast of good first-rate hotels run on European lines. Most of the visitors who come to Hardwar are pious but poor pilgrims. Their needs are modest and are easily satisfied wherever they camp for the day. For the quest of the soul is more intense, more urgent and earthly comforts are often sacrificed if only to linger in the prospect of a possible glimpse of God.

Shall we now have a glance at Puri on the East Coast?

In Puri, Jagannath, the God of the common man, the God zealously protected from the onslaughts of time, history and political marauders, reigns supreme. Puri and Jagannath are synonymous.

You cannot think of one without the other. Note its geographical isolation between the surf on the one hand and the marshy swamps on the other. Its catholicism was beyond question. Thus Col. Hunter: "The fetishism of the aboriginal races, the wild flower worship of the Vedas and the lofty qualities of the great Indian reformer, have alike found refuge here". Ori-

ginally a Pan-like resident of the forests, Jagannath has gradually become urbanised. Gods, like men, can have sophisticated routine. So with Jagannath. Vaishnavism and Shaivism often combine to bring gods to the level of men. Thus does the average man get a proper vision of divinity domesticated. The god wakes up amidst ritual, has a bath, has food, is worshipped, enjoys his forty winks...the ritual is un-ending!

Legend has it that in 1174 A.D. King Anang Bhim Deo ascended the throne of Orissa and committed the heinous sin of killing a Brahman. No expiation was good enough. The only way out was to appease the gods. Slabs of gold and jewels galore went into the construction and the result was Jagannath. A labour of 14 years ready for the world to behold in 1198 A.D., a wealthy God which according to ancient computation yielded a nett income of £6800 per annum. Not for nothing did Ranjit Singh bequeath the renowned Koh-i-Nur to Jagannath!

The sacred enclosure almost square-shaped is 652 feet long and 630 feet broad. A stone wall about 20 feet high surrounds the structure. The great conical tower, 'an elaborately curved sugar-loaf' is 192 feet high. The main temple consists of the usual four chambers: the Hall of Offerings, the Pillared Hall for the musicians and dancing girls, the Hall of Audience and the Sanctuary itself consisting of Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra and his sister Subhadra.

Much of legend surrounds the annual car festival, which takes place in June or July every year. The great car is 45 feet high, 35 feet square and is supported on 16 wheels of 7 feet diameter. Devotees in a frenzy of religious ecstasy are supposed to have made sacrificial offerings of themselves to the God. Of course, one can rationalise. In big throngs of humanity, accidents are bound to occur and when a small town gets enlarged from a muddy little stream and assumes oceanic proportions, fatalities, despite official care, are bound to result.

Visitors to the twelve-yearly Kumbha Mela will easily endorse this statement. Unfortunately, human imagination is likely to exaggerate incidents.

Of different genre is the surf-beaten temple of Konarak, the piece de resistance of medieval Orissan architecture which has stood the test of time despite inclement nature. Built by King Narasimhavadeva I (1238-1264 A.D.) as a monument of victory over the infidel Muslims, Konarak, 'the sun's corner', earlier known as the Black Pagoda to differentiate it from the white plastered structure at Puri, was according to legend, built in 12 years' time by 1,200 artificers, while 12 years' revenue was expended on it. There are 12 pairs of beautifully sculptured wheels on two sides, while seven magnificent horses attempt to pull the massive weight. The number twelve was obviously sacred to the generations of yore. Perhaps it represented the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

Legend which cannot be divorced from Hindu mythology at any stage must have its say here also. Lord Krishna had a son named Shamba who incurred the ire of his father and was cursed to lose his looks and become a leper. A 12-year penance was advised. Propitiation to the sun-god brought about freedom from the foul disease. Hence, Konarak, 'an architectural image of the mythical chariot of the sun, speeding through the heaven'. Luckily in Hindu mythology, there is an antidote to every poison. Penance often shows the way. What greater glory than a tribute to the sun-god, the life-giver before whom every form of life 'from the most carnal to the most refined' is sacred. As one author has summed up: 'Konarak is a living testimony to the speculative daring, and the artistic sensibility of a race that once knew how to live, love, worship and create in heroic proportions!'

What about Bhuvaneswar, the Lord of the Three worlds? Here you have a profusion of temples, the chef d'oeuvre being the Lingaraj Temple which is re-

presented by a block of granite about 8 feet in diameter and 9 feet in height with three shadings, indicative of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver and Siva the Destroyer. Bhuvaneswar is clearly indicative of a mood of hectic activity in temple-construction which must have overpowered the people between the sixth and the ninth centuries. It would appear as if a host of artists and sculptors have run amok and built in a frenzy of delight wherever they could. And yet there is a method in the madness evinced.

The main structure of the Lord of the Three worlds, the main body of the Lingaraj sanctuary consists of four important sections which are often to be found in Orissan architecture, viz: the refectory, the dancing-hall, the porch and the tower. A tower of 180 feet without mortar is an achievement for all time behold. Yes, the Lingaraj with its sixty-five secondary sanctuaries clustered around the Central pile is a world of its own.

Nor is this all. There is consummate art and beauty even in smaller temples. Witness for example the Mukteswara Sanctuary, characterised by Fergusson as a 'gem of Orissan architecture'. Situated as it is, Mukteswara cannot escape attention, particularly when we take into consideration its sylvan background. Siva dancing is always a beautiful theme to portray cosmic movement in stone. In the words of Mr. Coomaraswami: "The essential significance of Siva's dance is three-fold: first, it is the image of his rhythmic play as the source of all movement within the cosmos; secondly the purpose of his dance is to release the countless souls of men from the snare of illusion; thirdly, the place of the dance, Chidambaram, the centre of the Universe, is within the heart." It would be difficult to improve upon this verdict.

Here as in Puri, the anthropomorphic tendencies of the Hindus come into full play and gods are invested with a halo of cosy round-the-clock domesticity, almost

reminiscent of a railway time-table. The gods have a rigid routine which no power on earth can alter.

There is a facet of Orissan architecture which has baffled the art critic. I am referring to the use made of 'Maithana' or the erotic motif. At Puri, Bhuvaneswar and Konarak, you have rows and rows of gods and goddesses, immobilised in perennial sexual embraces which never seem to end. Perhaps this element in Hindu worship had its origin in 'agricultural fertility rites, especially those associated with the festivals of the spring solstice when the strengthening of the sun was the object in view!' Konarak in particular has excited the vivid imagination of Yeats-Brown who says: 'Lust is generally furtive; here it has been deified.' The gods and goddesses remain locked in a state of 'petrified desire' and the entire tableau is perhaps intended as a commentary on passion, 'reducing libido to terms of stone'.

On the other hand, we know that the Hindus brought Gods down to the level of human beings for all and sundry to understand and appreciate. If gods and goddesses were humanised and could indulge in sleeping, bathing, worshipping, eating, how could the play of Kama, of Eros, be excluded? This then was a normal function of the body, very much of the earth, earthy! In any case, it speaks volumes for the tolerance of the times. Even orthodoxy winked at it—or was it powerless to stem the tide of the profane? Or was it the influence of men like Vallabhaswami who preached that God was not to be sought, 'in nakedness, hunger and solitude' but amidst the enjoyments of life?

To these three holy places, to Puri in particular, masses of mankind roll in every year in quest of God. As in the past, they come on foot, in palanquins, by bullock-carts, by trains and by planes, from every part of the country. The roads, particularly those leading upto Bhuvaneswar and Konarak need improvement and we have no doubt this will be done shortly.

What is it that brings people to Puri, year in and year out, to lend a hand and see the majestic march of the Lord of the Earth, in his wondrous glory? It is the fervour of faith. You may call it blind faith but there it is. Years have rolled by but this tradition has not died down. It remains deeply imbedded in human hearts and nothing on earth can obliterate it.

Rameshwaram, the place of our next halt is a small island separated by an iron bridge from the main land of India and washed by the Gulf of Bengal. Having come to India, you are not likely to miss our neighbouring Emerald Island, Ceylon and if you do so, Rameshwaram will be on the way, except for a small run of 7 miles of a branch line from Pamban station. The Indo-Ceylon Express of the Southern Railway which leaves Egmore station (Madras) every evening sees you in Pamban next day in the afternoon. A connecting train will bring you into the holy of holies within a few minutes. Alternatively, you could fly from Madras to Trichinopoly (now called Tiruchirapalli) and then go down south by train.

While the temple itself is of recent date,—the beginning was probably made about 1640—and while architecturally it may be deemed to be inferior to such marvels as those of Madura, Conjeevaram and Chidambaram, also in the South, the forces of legends have invested it with a halo of sanctity which it would now be impossible to diminish in the near future. The temple is dedicated to Siva and is supposed to have been founded by Rama, the darling God of the Hindus. This is so much a question of faith. The devout and the orthodox believe in the historicity of Rama and the Ramayana that 'Divine Poem, ocean of milk!' According to our legends, Rama on his return from Lanka (Ceylon), after he had vanquished his fell enemy Ravana, halted at Rameshwaram and invested it with holiness which no passage of time can obliterate. In Rameshwaram, the guide will still quite enthusiastically show you the spot

from where Sita emerged victorious from her fire ordeal in which she dived to prove her chastity to her husband. You will still see Rama washing his hair after his victory over Ravana. The pilgrimage is therefore always worth it!

The temple itself is built on rising ground above a lake which is about 3 miles in circumference. It is constructed in a quadrangular enclosure 657 feet broad, 1000 ft. long with a gateway of 200 ft. in height. According to one source, the work on the temple was commenced by Raja Sekarar of Kandy. The main beauty of Rameshwaram and its chief glory lies in its pillared corridors which surround it and form avenues which lead upto it. The breadth of these columned passages ranges from 17 to 21 ft., the height is about 25 ft. It is a pity that some of these corridors have been blocked to locate the vahanams (vehicles) and other appendages. Nor are some of the paintings in a good state of preservation. The double shrine is enclosed in three concentric perimeter walls. Obviously, judging by results, the whole thing has been planned and constructed in one period. As in many of the temples in the South, it is the gopuram which steals the limelight. Here it has 11 storeys and commands a height of 150 ft. The use of dark hard limestone is apparent in the construction. What strikes one obviously is the massiveness of construction which is often monolithic in effect. There are slabs of stone 40 feet long which have been used in construction.

The place boasts of a number of Dharamsalas of an Indian pattern in which you may not find food to your taste. There are no hotels run on European style. A short stay would therefore be more desirable. But a visit to Rameshwaram is important. Everything in the place is sacred, so sacred in fact that while in the island, you are not supposed to indulge in such mundane occupations as ploughing and farming, or extracting oil or making pottery. When you tread on the sea

shore, remember that each particle of sand represents the Lord Shivalinga and men and women have trudged miles on end, often by bullock carts or on foot to get a glimpse of the ruling deity of Rameshwaram. The majesty of Rameshwaram is undoubted, indeed.

On the southernmost tip of Kathiawar now known as Saurashtra stands the windswept, weather-beaten, wave-washed shore temple of Somnath on the site of ancient Prabhas Patan. Why have we selected this ancient and hallowed spot for a visit? Somnath is like a coloured mist of eternity which may lift its veil for a while, only to bring it down again after a while. It is one of those imponderables of Indian history and tradition which one cannot set aside easily. We may as well therefore get near to it—and see it at closer range.

First, the ancient tradition. History and geography, mythology and superstition have combined to make of Prabhas Patan a place of importance since the days of long ago. Geographically Prabhas stood as a gateway to India for adventurers and traders coming from the West and going towards the East. Turn to any ancient historian, whether it is Al Birini or Zakaria-al-kazvini and you will find Somnath described in glowing terms in their pages. Strabo and Pericles of Greek fame have mentioned it. Pliny, the Greek historian mentions Patemxi or Patan in his pages. The identity is unmistakable. The fact is that the fame of Somnath had rolled on the waves of the high seas and the wealth and grandeur with which the original temple was invested had gone round the four corners of the world. Fantastic stories were recited about Somnath, the receptacle of the Holy of Holies, of the sacred Lingam of God Siva, of the foremost of the Hindu pantheon. Rumour had it that an endowment of a thousand villages went into the upkeep of Somnath, that a thousand Brahmins were engaged in the daily worship of the idol, that a bevy of five-hundred dancing-cum-

singing damsels did terpsichorean homage to the God every day. The principal edifice was supposed to have been built on fifty-six pillars, jewelled chandeliers adorned the main hall and there was a chain of gold deposited within the portals of the temple—a mere matter of 200 maunds. No wonder then that Somnath enjoyed a legendary fame which was also incidentally its downfall.

Such munificence cannot be without its mythological counterpart. The Hindus have always been blessed with an extremely vivid imagination and one of the ways in which it sought expression was the weaving of mythological episodes which would put the combined efforts of the Iliad and the Odyssey to shame. Remember, the mythological *raison d'être* behind the construction of the temples at Puri and Konarak. Most of the Hindu temples have their origin in atonement; the commission of the sin followed by repentance. According to ancient lore, Lord Krishna of Mathura-fame breathed his last at Prabhas Patan. History has it that the Yadavas inebriated with power played pranks with the Holy Sages (Rishis) who in turn cursed them. Krishna advised them to seek salvation by visiting Somnath and propitiating the gods but the incorrigible Yadavas did not pay any heed to his words. Legend has it that when Krishna lay reclining under a pipal tree, tired and jaded, he was shot through the foot by a huntsman, as he had been mistaken for a deer. Prabhas, the Land of the Sun, the shining one, became a hallowed spot thereafter.

But how came Somnath itself? *Cherchez la femme* and you have the answer. Chandra (Moon) had developed an unusual fascination for Rohini, the daughter of the demi-God Dakshsha when all his twenty-six daughters had been given to him in marriage. The rage of the remaining frustrated females brought a curse upon Chandra from his erstwhile father-in-law. Result: the curse that he would have the affliction of perennial consumption. The Moon came to Prabhas and sought

the favours of Siva by persistent worship and entreaties. Came partial cure. The moon would retain his pock marks for half the month—during the other half, he would shine in his pristine glory. But, there was a condition. The Jyotir Linga, 'the self manifested emblem of the God Siva in Prabhas Patan'—had to be venerated and the God Siva—Somnath—would be pleased. And so it was.

Prabhas itself means very shining, the extremely brilliant; Surya (the sun) used to shine in all his lustre in Prabhas and so great was the heat and glare generated by him that even his wife Chhaya (shadow) could only approach him at certain times of the day. An ancient hymn says:

"Oh Goddess! of all the splendid places on earth, this is the most brilliant". A Jyotir-linga, the part and parcel of the great divinity, the emblem of life, of fertility was to be seen only in a few sacred spots on earth. It was only natural therefore, that a monument befitting the importance of the emblem should be erected in honour of Siva on this site.

As regards the edifice itself, take it for what it is worth but legend has it that the temple was first built of gold by Soma, then of silver by Ravana and finally of wood by Krishna. Historically speaking, Raja Bhimdeo of Anahilwad erected the temple and Kumarpal his successor embellished and improved upon it.

Now if there was one thing which obsessed Islamic worshippers, it was the idea of plural worship. The idea of monism, of one God, the absence of an intermediary between man and God sometimes developed an obsessional compulsion, a proselytising complex which could only fructify with the use of the sword which destroyed the idol and brought man forcibly in direct and immediate contact with his maker. A very nice ideal except that the blood bath accompanying the iconoclastic fury left a trail of misery behind which brought man no nearer to his God but only increased his hatred for the

infidel, the non-believer in idols. Of considerable importance, although belittled in official records by kowtowing court historians was the fact that each such marauding adventure gave an added fillip to existence and often helped—as in the case of Somnath—to enrich the coffers of an impoverished exchequer!

Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was the self-appointed chosen one of Allah who made his inroads into Hindustan in September 1025 and taking a pick of 30,000 war veterans, swooped upon Somnath via the present States of Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Ajmer in Rajasthan and then came down to the southernmost tip of Saurashtra, to wit Somnath. If there was one province in India in which political balkanisation was rampant, it was good old Saurashtra which we are told after the dissolution of the Vallabhi power gave itself up to the extremely palatable proposition of living in a fool's paradise under the shadow of the ever-watchful Somnath. The Brahmins at Somnath, inebriated with the opiate of religion sought inspiration and refuge in the holy sanctuary. The gods no doubt inspired the worshippers but then the weapons were on the side of the invaders and Somnath fell a prey to good marksmanship, achieved as the result of years of training in archery. The final onslaught may well be imagined.

Exaggerated accounts have come down to us for our benefit from the historians of Mahmud Ghazni. We are told that he took away with himself two million dinars of gold and silver and jewels. According to sober history, there was not much of the idol-breaker and idol-seller in Mahmud, nor is there any semblance in the schoolboy yarn of Mahmud having taken away the silver gates of Somnath which were pompously resuscitated by Lord Ellenborough in 1844. History like legend can play a number of pranks on us. Imagination, often a good aid to erudition, can sometimes cause havoc where historical veracity is concerned. The net result of all this was that the Hindu worshippers' faith in Somnath

remains undiminished and the passing shadow of Mahmud was soon forgotten. But the visitation caused a set-back in the life of Somnath and unlucky Somnath was to undergo some further shocks. In 1297 Alauddin, the brother of Alauddin Khilji over-ran Gujerat and Saurashtra and did not spare Somnath; but then Somnath is timeless. Like the phoenix it rose from the ashes with greater glory every time it was destroyed.

Whither Somnath?

The work of renovation and embellishment on Somnath commenced with Raja Bhimdeo and Siddhraj Solanki. Later on, in 1743 Ahalya Bai Holkar built a new shrine. After the Partition of India, in fact on 13th November, 1947, Somnath saw a new sun rise on its glory when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel announced the construction of a new structure to be super-imposed on the existing site. This work has progressed very satisfactorily and when the tourist stands on the sandy shore of Somnath and sees the glorious new and has a vision of the resplendent old which is unfortunately no longer existent, he will no doubt have a vision of glory that was India.

While Hardwar, Puri and Rameshwaram are living symbols of Hindu faith, we have given a brief review of Somnath largely because of its historical importance. Humanity throngs to the first three places of pilgrimage but not to Somnath. There was, however, a time when Somnath shone with spiritual glory.

Shall we say something now of earthly glory?

CHAPTER IV

MOGHUL GENIUS AT ITS BEST

A DISTINGUISHED traveller wrote: "To those who have not already seen it, I will say, 'Go to India. The Taj alone is well worth the journey'." This poem in stone, this lyric in marble, has been the envy of the world and has served as a beacon light for visitors from the four corners of the world to have its darshan. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Taj has made Agra. It is the Taj which is symbolic of all that is finest and the best in Indian culture. But enough of encomiums because every guide book has lavished praises galore on the Taj already. The Taj ought by now to be blushing, particularly when seen through the roseate dawn or the autumnal mist of a setting sun.

Agra is situated on the main line of the Central Railway system at a distance of 835 and 122 miles from Bombay and Delhi respectively. Very convenient trains, most of them with air-conditioned coaches attached make a pilgrimage to Taj an extremely delectable proposition. At Agra itself, there are a number of high class hotels—Laurie's and Imperial particularly—to suit the European taste in living and cuisine and the usual facilities with which the visiting tourist is familiar will be supplied to him at extremely reasonable rates. Taxis and other conveyances are readily available at every hotel and there are willing hotel guides who would show you round the principal places of interest in Agra. The hotel guides are more reliable and better equipped than outside guides. Most of them know enough of English to make themselves understood and to enable you to appreciate something of the place.



AGRA: *The Taj*



Taj from the Agra Fort

FATEHPUR SIKRI: Panch Mahal



While the monuments of interest at Agra may be seen in any order, for an understanding of the cultural aspect, the historical perspective would give you a better insight into Agra. Agra like many a metropolis in India has time and again basked in the royal glory and patronage of its rulers, which, in turn increased its importance and added to its stature, in gradual doses. It is, however, with the advent of the Moghuls that Agra came into its own and reached its grandeur. But then among Moghuls also, we come across a number of whims and individual eccentricities and the Capital—and with it a lot of shifting population—kept moving to Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Lahore and so on. The Moghuls sometimes assumed the role of peripatetic rulers who did not bestow their favours on any one city in particular. Akbar himself changed his capital from Delhi to Agra and then to Fatehpur Sikri and then to Lahore and Agra. Jahangir preferred Agra but then spent a lot of his time in Srinagar. Shah Jahan seemed more inclined to favour Delhi as the seat of Government although he built some priceless monuments at Agra also. So while at Agra, let us examine the contribution of some of these rulers to this city.

Akbar's main contribution was the construction of the 2700 ft. long semi-circular fortress palace at Agra, executed in red stone which was the ruling passion of the Moghuls at that time. Situated beautifully parallel to the banks of the meandering Jamuna river, it has a massive enclosure wall of solid sandstone rampart about 70 feet in height, and a mile and a half in circuit. It may truly be said that the Moghuls even when they took up something banal invested it with a personal touch of genius which transformed the whole show and raised it to a higher pedestal. The fort at Agra is a mass of battlements and embrasures and is both a

military and strategic item in defence as also a palace with residential quarters for royalty.

As is usual with some other forms of Moghul architecture, the fort has two entrances, one of a private nature on the south side and the other main ceremonial entrance on the west side called the Delhi Gate. Here, the front consists of two broad octagonal towers joined by an archway while at the back is a dignified facade with arcaded terraces above it, surrounded by cupolas, kiosks and pinnacles. It may be said to the credit of Akbar that in his execution of architectural ideas, he did not have to import foreign technicians. He had complete faith in the existing indigenous material and he succeeded by his encouragement in bringing it out to the forefront. Sandstone was the principle motif in his architecture. It was relatively cheap and if it did not have the exquisite delicacy of marble, it had solidity and strength and has withstood the ravages of time quite successfully. Akbar used rich and varied ornamentation in embellishing the Fort and to a certain extent introduced unorthodox motifs e.g. the bird motif which was contrary to the tenets of Koran. On the point of the use of sandstone, there was sharp difference of opinion between Akbar and his grandson Shah Jahan who even went to the length of demolishing some of the edifices erected by Akbar in sandstone and replaced them by marble. So great was his aversion to sandstone.

Let us now proceed to have a look at Akbar's tomb at Sikandara at Agra, the foundations of which were laid in Akbar's time but the mausoleum was not finished till 1613. This is a hybrid in composition and finish and clearly brings out a sharp clash in artistic temperament between the father and the son. The tomb is an essay in aesthetics. Architecturally it has been considered to be a retrogression although it compares favourably with Humayun's tomb. The main building is a

square of 320 feet and has a total height of 100 feet. It has four graceful minarets one rising above each corner. Imposing gateways have been erected. At some stage in the construction of the work, Jahangir's interference is obvious and he ordered, with a characteristic flourish, a good bit of the portion to be rebuilt at a cost of Rs. 50 lacs to the Indian exchequer. Akbar's conception according to Percy Brown was more forceful, Jahangir's—remember he was a painter first and an architect afterwards!—more pretty. According to art critics, the tomb at Sikandara although one of the most ambitious products ever attempted by the Moghuls, lacks substance and volume and indicates in no small measure the irresponsible interference of an enlightened despot who might well have left architectural effects to artists who knew better!

The next monument which attracts our attention is the tomb of Itmad-ud-Daula, a tribute to Jahangir's father-in-law, built in 1626, delicate, refined, stylistic aiming more at the finished product rather than mere size. It has a walled enclosure of 540 feet and the mausoleum is situated in a garden, surrounded by beautiful lawns. Here we find another important departure from tradition; a change from the old inlaid work known as 'opus sectile' to a marble intarcia of various colours, now known as 'pietra dura' which consisted of hard and rare stones such as lapis, onyx, topaz etc., which were all buried in marble. A superb example of this work can be seen in the tomb of Itmad-ud-Daulah. Here we notice a move from sandstone to marble which gives an exquisite finish to this miniature gem of Muslim architecture.

With Shah Jahan, marble reigned supreme. Shah Jahan's advent brought in the heyday of architectural glory for India, a powerful massive movement in fine arts, the like of which the East had not witnessed for centuries. Such concentrated periods of cultural acti-

vity as the years between 1627 and 1658 are rare in the annals of any nation's history. Of course, you might say with Mr. Aldous Huxley that there is a certain amount of vulgarity in colossal expenditure on artistic expression at the cost of welfare projects. India was not particularly rich—by no manner or means—but then the conception of socialistic ideas of a welfare state were by no means current coin and the whims of despots prevailed and made money flow like water by the turning of a tap. There was a certain robustness, solidity, strength about earlier Moghul architecture—we now have architecture which is pretty, exquisite, delicate in finish, lacy in texture, in short voluptuous, effeminate. As regards the marble motif, Shah Jahan exploited the quarries at Makaran in Jodhpur State.

When you go to the fort, you will see a number of beautiful buildings inside which were built by Shah Jahan. The Diwan-i-Am, the Hall of public Audience and then the Diwan-i-khas, the Hall of Private Audience are two of them.

A sheer beauty is the Moti Masjid, the "Pearl Mosque" characterised as "one of the purest and most elegant buildings of its class to be found anywhere (1646-54)". This was also a contribution of Shah Jahan and is approached by a double staircase with a railing. Here again is an admixture of red stone on the exterior and marble in the interior. A beautiful marble tank gives it added beauty. The mosque proper is made up of three aisles. The other places of interest you might see here are the Anguri Bagh, literally the Grape Garden, the Jahangiri Mahal built by Akbar. The red stone motif is again apparent. The edifice is 249 feet by 260 feet and has the principle facade decorated with bright tiles. Adjacent to the Jahangiri Mahal lies the Akbari Mahal from which you can have a view both of the river and the Taj. An arresting feature of the

place is the large central court yard which is 140 feet square.

What about the Taj itself? And before we extol its virtues and praise its architectural and artistic beauties, may we enquire as to what others have thought of it? Not the present generation of art critics and professors and tourists and laymen, but historians and architects of long ago?

Let me recapitulate. According to Bernier, "the edifice has a magnificent appearance and is conceived and executed beautifully. Nothing offends the eye . . . the mausoleum of Taj Mahal is an astonishing work." Tavernier says: "I witnessed the commencement and accomplishment of this great work, on which they have expended twenty-two years, during which twenty-thousand men worked incessantly; this is sufficient to enable one to realise that the cost of it has been enormous." Fergusson observes: "It is the combination of so many beauties and the perfect manner in which each is subordinate to the other that makes up a whole which the world cannot match." What about Havell? He dubs it as "a living thing with all the aesthetic attributes of perfect womanhood, more subtle, romantic and tender in its beauty than any other building of its kind." One could quote almost indefinitely. And most of the adjectives and superlatives have been culled out from the English dictionary and lavished on the Taj.

It is, therefore, refreshing to place before the reader the opinion of Mr. Aldous Huxley on the same subject, to wit, the Taj. To Mr. Huxley, the Taj was a disappointment and Mr. Huxley's opinion cannot be set aside brusquely. Reasons? Let us hear Mr. Huxley . . . "while I am very fond of architecture and the decorative arts, I am very little interested in the expensive or the picturesque, as such and by themselves. Now the great qualities of the Taj are precisely those of expensiveness and picturesqueness". Now,

this is hardly fair. One would have expected Mr. Huxley to criticise the Taj on its merits e.g. as he says later, "architecturally, the worst features of the Taj are its minarets". Which is a matter of opinion. And where opinion is concerned, even experts are likely to disagree. Percy Brown, for example, has compared the Central Dome with the smaller cupolas and the minarets. According to him, these were provided as a subtle contrast and the effect is 'likened to a change of key in the melodic treatment of the whole'. As regards expensiveness, well, modern ideas of welfare states had not then dawned on the world. Even enlightened despotism of the European genre came much later in the 18th century. If Versailles was a dream of Louis XIV, why not the Taj of Shah Jahan? It was Paris which saw the Revolution and the Guillotine, not Agra! Le Roi Soleil as also Shah Jahan the Magnificent, the builder of the Taj, did not stint at expenditure. Maybe there is a streak of the vulgar in ostentatious display of wealth—or its translation into works of munificence. But that alone need not condemn Taj. Shah Jahan replaced the plebian concept of solid red sandstone by the delicate, if feminine, marble. Says Mr. Huxley, "Marble, I perceive, covers a multitude of sins!" I have a feeling that Mr. Huxley was somewhat prejudiced.

To get on to the Taj. Perhaps the best time to see it is by the setting sun in the evening or again when the sun is just rising. On the Sharadh Purnima of October when the moon is full and the nights are crystal clear after the dust has been washed away from the sky the Taj is at its best and thousands of visitors flock to make this annual pilgrimage. But for heaven's sake, do not go on a hot summer day with the full blazing wrath of the Indian sun on your head. You will never regret it for the rest of your life.

The Taj was wholly a conception of Shah Jahan

himself. There is some confusion created in our minds by Manrique's assertion regarding the association of the Venetian architect Veroneo. Veroneo may have been consulted at some stage but the character of the monument is wholly indigenous. Its precursors alone would show it. For the Taj has antecedents in the Tombs of Humayun and of Khan Khannan, both of which were familiar to Shah Jahan. The approach to the Taj is via the formal lawns and cypress trees. The ornamental gardens prepare you towards a solemn approach to the main sanctuary. Actually, the main structure occupies only a small portion of the architectural scheme as a whole, which is a rectangle 1900 by 100 feet. From the architectural point of view, the points to consider are the structures on terraces, with a white marble tomb structure in the middle of the terrace. As regards the mausoleum itself, it is elevated on a plinth 22 feet high, square in plan, 136 ft. wide. While the composition is simple and in plain form there is a facile grouping, rhythmic disposal and skilful intersection of each part. The crowning glory is universally recognised as the marble dome on which lavish praises have been showered by every visitor. Someone has likened it to a 'cloud reclined upon his airy throne.'

The chief beauty of the Taj lies perhaps in the exquisite sense of proportion maintained throughout, in its construction. However, nothing like forming your own opinion about it. So, have a good look at it yourself and then tell us what you think about it.

Apart from historical sights, Agra has a number of other important things to show you. The place abounds in a number of educational institutions and is itself a University town. The Agra College is an important landmark in our educational progress. Besides there is a Roman Catholic Cathedral, Convent, Schools. A famous place is Dayal Bagh, a settlement of the

Radhaswami cult where the people are conducting a number of experiments in varied fields of human activity. Dayal Bagh is a famous spiritual centre also.

The little girl who went to see Sikri for the first time exclaimed: 'But, mother, doesn't any one live here?' Well, that is likely to be your reaction also. And yet the fact is that no one lives there particularly, although you have before you, as you approach the ridge at Sikri an entire township, complete with monuments, pavilions, terraces and what not in a remarkable state of preservation. Which is quite an arresting feature about Sikri.

Now this idea of building or shifting townships for sentimental-cum-whimsical considerations was not unique with Akbar alone. Much earlier Mohmad-bin-Tughlaq had shifted his entire capital, bag and baggage, from Delhi to Daulatabad. In the year 1336, two brothers Hakka and Bukka had founded an empire, by laying the foundations of the once magnificent and glorious town of Vijayanagar of which only a few remains are now available near the village of Hampi. Remember again: Raja Jai Singh built Jaipur about 5 miles from the then existing and perfectly satisfactory town of Amber; Jodha's Jodhpur, an hour's walk from Mandar; the Udaipur of Udai, next door to Ark. Instances of this nature could be multiplied easily.

Akbar built Sikri out of more practical considerations. He had no male issue surviving and once in the course of his numerous perambulations, he had halted at Sikri which was then the abode of the famous Saint Sheikh Salim Chisti. The Saint blessed him and right enough Akbar became the father of a male issue. The event could not be allowed to go by. Out of deference for the holy and the spiritual, Akbar ordered a new capital to be built on this site, which is situated at a distance of 26 miles from Agra. Akbar never intended this capital to be built as a strategic measure.

In case of emergency, you could always fall back on the fortress-palace at Agra which he had already built for that purpose. Sikri took years to build and within this short period sprang up a complex of buildings which consisted of religious and palatial edifices and made ample provision for residential quarters, secretarial buildings etc. And now, well may we quote the poet: 'How doth this city sit solitary that was full of people'.

The trip to Sikri is a simple proposition and is a day's matter all told. Since you will be headquartered at Agra, all you need is transport—taxis are available at your hotel—and the services of a good guide. The Hotel will give you a dry luncheon basket. A winter's morning is a wonderful time to go to Sikri. A day's romp will pay you ample dividends. You return in the afternoon, in good time for a steaming cup of tea and a hot bath. You could do the same journey by train also.

Now let us have a closer view of Sikri. The main approach to Sikri is from Agra. The Naubat Khanna, literally Drum House, intended for distinguished visitors ushers you directly into Diwani-Am or the Hall of Public Audience. In the rear, you come across a large expanse of territory which in those days was a preserve for the zenana—the female quarters—and no peering foreign eyes had access to it. The royal apartments were always closely guarded. Then there were a supplement of edifices like offices, serais, gardens, royal stables etc. A word of comment here.

Although Sikri was literally created by Akbar, the buildings appear to have sprung up pell-mell. Not that this detracts from their artistic or architectural merits. But there were no serious attempts made at town planning as we understand it today. Besides it would seem that Akbar, like many other Eastern potentates, having set his heart upon this toy-creation

of his, wanted it to be completed as early as possible. The local artificers whom Akbar recruited from the surrounding guilds could not have been able to do justice to the job for the sheer magnitude of it. Hence Akbar had to import men from the adjoining provinces. They in turn brought the stamp of their own peculiar and individual genius to bear upon the work. Hence, a certain amount of lack of harmony when looked at it as a whole. The ruling motif with Akbar was the red sandstone. This he exploited fully in Sikri. Ample supplies were available on the spot and the problem of transport was minimised. Perhaps this was another consideration in the selection of the site.

At Sikri there is a clear demarcation of buildings into religious and secular. In fact, it would be difficult to award the plum to either. Among the religious buildings are such classics as the Great Mosque, the Buland Darwaza (the Triumphant Gateway), the Tomb of Sheikh Salim Chisti and the Mausoleum of Islam Khan. Originally there was only the Mosque built in 1571, measuring 542 by 438 feet, one of the most finished and typical products of the times. It was specially noted for some of the exquisite floral mural decorations and unsurpassed carved inlaid and painted ornamentation. As one authority points out, "it is as if the artists had taken as their model the pages of an exquisitely illuminated manuscript and enlarged these with their jewelled geometry of line and colour to enrich the spaces on the walls." Well—need we say more?

The Buland Darwaza or the triumphant archway would alone be sufficient to earn for Akbar the gratitude of posterity. Built 25 years later, on his return from the Deccan to commemorate his conquest, it has been characterised as one of the most successful of Moghul achievements as an example of building and purposeful art. Look at the imposing structure. It is 134 feet

high, with a flight of steps 42 feet high. A sheer height of 176 feet thus greets you on arrival. 'The structure resolves itself into two aspects, the frontal and the highest aspect forming the facade with portal and back-view consisting of lower and plainer portion.' As usual with other similar structures, the frontal facade comes in for elaborate decorative treatment with ornamental inscriptions giving the following message: "The world is a bridge, pass over it, but build no house upon it. Who hopes for an hour, hopes for eternity. The world is an hour. Spend it in prayer, for the rest is unseen."

Perhaps the piece de resistance at Sikri is Sheikh Salim Chisti's tomb which in fact was the *raison d'être* for Sikri. In sheer delicacy and refinement of taste there is nothing to beat this structure. It is petite, like a dainty morsel of human flesh and yet there is so much ethereal beauty and fretted exquisiteness locked inside it that it continues to snatch adulation, even if we refuse to accord it. Akbar originally built it in red sand stone. Shah Jahan's artistic susceptibilities were obviously deeply offended for he could not brook its presence in red stone. Hence it was transformed into refined and costly marble. The square exterior is 24 feet, with a mortuary chamber 16 feet in diameter. A low dome covers the structure. There is a wide circulating verandah with roof carried on pillars with interspaces filled by perforated screens. The total exterior is 48' in diameter.

Among the secular buildings, perhaps the most arresting are the Palaces which Akbar laid aside for his Queens and Ministers. The principal ones among them are the Palaces of Jodhbai, the houses of Miriam, the Sultana, of Raja Birbal. While the apartments of Sultana and Miriam are smaller, we may have a closer look at the Palace of Jodhbai. This was a livable palace which could readily be divided into a number of suites and was built strictly in accordance with

Muslim traditions of making the female apartments as much secluded as possible. While the entrance was through guarded gatehouse, there was a high plain outside wall, facing the interior court yard. A private chapel was attached, as a gesture of Akbar's catholic temperament for Akbar believed in the propagation of different faiths. There were a number of roof terraces attached. Perhaps the most beautiful part of the Palace was a hanging pavilion known as Hawa Mahal.

Among the other buildings, we have the Panch Mahal, Khwabgah (the Hall of Dreams), the Astrologer's seat, Department of Records etc. which are all worth a visit. The building which will charm you most will be the Diwan-i-khas, a rectangular, two-storied structure with a flat roof and a pillared kiosk which bears the personal touch of Akbar's genius. The large pillar occupying the central position with a massive expanding capital supporting the circular stone platform has to be seen to be believed. With Diwan-i-khas we associate Akbar's propagation of Din-Ilahi or the universal faith. Akbar was at this stage visited by a number of dreams which made him shy away from the orthodox muslim faith, much to the horror of the mullahs around him. Akbar, from now onwards, started a new train of intellectual-cum-spiritual flirtations with Christian, Zoroastrian, Jain and Hindu faiths which caused a considerable amount of flutter in the then political dovecotes of the Mughal Empire. How much of Akbar's visionary zeal and spiritual effervescence was in response to the inner urge and how much political chicanery, we will leave to the pundits of history to determine. But as you ramble through the pavilions of the Diwan-i-Khas, you are bound to remember that here on this very site, vigorous if occasionally acrimonious philosophical and spiritual dissertations went on far in the night and if there was one clearing house of ontological ideas in India, it was in the Diwan-i-Khas

in Fatehpur Sikri.

As the sun is about to set on this desolate if romantic splendour, 'more picturesquely lovely than a desert-druin' according to Mr. Huxley, you will say good-bye to Sikri and pack up the remains of your lunch basket. May be you will not set your eyes on it again, so you may well have a long, lingering last look at it. We have already commented on the vulgarity of throwing money down a drain to achieve an object. Here is one more instance of this nature. This is with apologies to Mr. Huxley. You are welcome to form your own opinion. But remember, we in India, are not likely to put up another Sikri in any foreseeable future.

If there is one place which invokes philosophic thought it is Delhi. You recall the age-old expression that all Empires decay. Perhaps in the entire history of civilisation, there would be few places which could have changed hands so often as Delhi. In one of the plays of Kalidasa, our renowned poet of the 8th century A.D., there is a peasant who is hard at work. When he looks up from his labours, he finds someone on horse back, looking intently at him. The peasant looks up, smiles wanly, asks: Are you the king's representative? The man says, yes. The peasant says, well, here is the king's share of the land revenue. Now, let me work! The man departs in peace and the peasant jogs along! 'Delhi dur ast'—Delhi is far away, came to be recognised as a motto in many parts of India. Petty potentates, particularly after the dissolution of the Moghul Empire, took advantage of it. Distance, before the Britishers bound us over with hoops of steel, could cover a multitude of sins!

Delhi is a place of anachronisms. Here the very old and the very new rub shoulders in amazing proximity and one does not disturb the other. If you romp around Old Delhi and then emerge into the wider vistas of New Delhi, you would find it difficult to imagine

that the two different worlds could exist at such close range. Yet, there it is. Old Delhi is antiquated, there is history writ large on every stone and brick. If only the bricks and stones could talk, what fantastic tales would they have to narrate. Life in Old Delhi moves at a slow pace, traditions die hard, things take ages to change. New Delhi is modernised, is the seat of the present Government and although you may or may not find fault with the utilitarian hybrid architecture of Lutyens, yet, it is bound to make you think.

What has Delhi to show us? Let us have a closer look.

A word of history. The town is supposed to be of considerable antiquity. It has been mentioned in the Mahabharata as Indraprastha, founded by Yudhisthir. The Fort of Indra Pat is supposed to have been in close proximity to the present site of the Purana Quila, one of the ancient monuments which you are likely to see in Delhi. There are relics of a number of Hindu forts, prominent among them being the Lal Kot built by Raja Anang Pal in 1052; Prithvi Raj also had a hand in building Delhi in 1180. There are two Asoka Pillars, as also the famous colossal cast iron pillar at Kutb Minar, all of which prove obvious traces of Hindu domination. Thereafter came waves of Muslim influence and each one of the conquerors left some stamp on the place. Thus Allaudin Khilji built Siri in 1304, Tughlakabad was constructed by Tughlak Shah in 1321, Firozabad was founded by Emperor Feroz Shah Tughlak and so on.

Talk of sacks! Delhi had plenty. Not only empires changed hands overnight but the entire populace was put to rack and ruin. Instances of this nature could be easily furnished. Important among them were the sack by Timur, the Mughal, in 1398, long before the Moghuls overran Hindustan and settled down in India; the carnage by Nadir Shah, the Persian, in 1739 which was perhaps the worst of its kind for the horrors perpetrated,

the loot made—remember both the peacock throne and the Koh-i-noor were lifted physically on this occasion—followed by a sack by Ahmed Shah Durani, the Afghan, in 1756. Later in 1771, Delhi was captured by Madho Rao Scindia; in 1804 it was besieged by Jaswant Rao Holkar; finally came the Mutiny in 1857.

In such a place, the first thing which would naturally attract our attention would be the historical antiquities. We have seen some of them in details in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. We can now have a quick glance at them in Delhi. The one thing which needs some detailed attention is the Fort in Old Delhi. On the pattern of the Fort at Agra, this one has also got two entrances, two fine gates approached from the Lahore Gate and the Delhi Gate. The reigning motif is the red sandstone which assumes magnificent proportions in the Fort Wall. On the East Wall, we have the famous Naubat or Nakkhar Khanna where it became incumbent on all and sundry to dismount as a mark of respect to sovereignty unless you happened to be of royal blood or carried special rank. As you enter, you see a spacious inner court, 540 feet broad and 420 feet deep, which brings you to the Diwan-i-Am or the Hall of Public Audience, measuring about 100 by 60 feet, with the manifold columns and arches maintaining a beautiful sense of proportion. At the back stands the throne of the emperor which was restored by Lord Curzon.

Perhaps the piece de resistance of the Fort is the Diwan-i-Khas, with its peacock throne which was originally inlaid with sapphires, rubies, pearls. The throne is 6 x 4 feet with figures of two peacocks prominently displayed. There is a beautiful inscription for you to see here: 'If a paradise be on earth, it is this—it is this'. Connected by a shallow water channel, stand the Royal baths, with fountains and reservoirs of marble at close hand. The Moghuls certainly did themselves well. For one thing, if they complained of heat, they made all possible provi-

sions to keep themselves cool. Babur in 1526 complained of lack of amenities such as ice, flowers, cooling drinks on entering the plains of Hindustan. But then he had insufficient time at his disposal to settle down. The rest of them who had more time at their disposal made up for all these things.

A beautiful monument in the Fort is the Moti Masjid. The material utilised is exquisite white grey-veined marble. It was built in 1659 by Aurangzeb at a cost of 1,60,000 rupees. Beautiful bronze doors with designs in low relief adorn the place. The mosque has three arches. Hayat Bakhsh, near by, was the name given to a life-giving garden in which the Moghuls relaxed from the cares of the state. Rang Mahal (literally, Painted Palace) was the official residence of the Chief Sultana.

What about Jami Masjid, the celebrated mosque which is visible to you in its majestic glory from any side from which you choose to enter Delhi. This is a monumental work, commenced in 1644, completed in 1658 and in broad outlines not unlike the Moti Masjid in Agra Fort, except that it is built on a larger scale. Critics of architecture have commented on 'the capricious admixture of red sand stone with white marble' in the construction. The effect is nevertheless not jarring at all. The Masjid has three gateways and the main mosque is 201 by 120 feet, flanked by two minars jutting skywards each 130 feet high. The inside quadrangle is 325 feet square, with a beautiful marble basin and fountain in the Centre.

The list of other places which you might see in Delhi is legion. Among historical relics are places like Humayun's Tomb—the guide will promptly show you the staircase from which the emperor slipped and fell headlong—the Purana Quila, which was built by Sher Shah in 1541, Safdar Jang's Tomb at a distance of 5 miles, the world famous Kutb Minar, which stands 238 feet high, with 5 storeys at a distance of 11 miles



DELHI: *Kutb Minar*



Rajasthan Belles
JAIPUR



from Delhi; Jantar-Mantar or the observatory built by Raja Jai Singh, etc. The Chandni Chowk, literally 'moonlight thoroughfare' is world famous as one of the richest bazaars in the East, dealing as it does in such things as exquisite jewellery-making, embroideries, needle work in gold and silver, pottery etc. You are bound to pick up some mementoes from Chandni Chowk even if you alight for a few minutes. Since the death of Gandhiji on January 31, 1948, Rajghat, his burial ground has also become a place of pilgrimage.

Today, judged by any standards, Delhi is thoroughly modernised. Good hotels like The Maidens, the Cecil, the Swiss are available in Old Delhi, the Cecil retaining an old-world charm which you may not get anywhere else. It has kept up wonderful traditions of looking after your personal comforts and does not believe in the jazzy, loud kind of life which you may encounter at the Maidens, for example, in Old Delhi or at the Imperial in New Delhi. If you want gaiety and cheer, we would recommend the Imperial and the Maidens both providing dance-halls, cabarets, shows for entertainment. New Delhi itself has sprouted a number of good restaurants recently in the Continental pattern. A meal, a dance, a show at the Gay Lords or the Alps is quite the thing to do for an evening for a change from the Hotel fare.

Delhi also boasts of a number of good picture houses and theatres. Since the dawn of independence in the country, the cultural side of India has advanced considerably. Delhi has the advantage of being the Capital of the country and also it houses the representatives of most of the important countries of the world. The atmosphere can often be truly international. There are very few evenings when you will not get some ballet or dance drama or play or music festival. You are quite likely to see here a good bit of the ancient culture of India. The winter is particularly the season to promote the fine arts and Delhi assumes a gay appearance at this time of the year.

CHAPTER V

RAMBLING THROUGH RAJASTHAN

JAIPUR

NOW we step into Rajasthan. Perhaps the most important place in this ancient land is the 'tone of Autumn sunset' known as Jaipur. Conveniently situated and accessible both from Bombay and Delhi, it is a 'must' in the itinerary of every tourist. Of course, there are other attractive places in Rajasthan such as Udaipur, Jodhpur and Bikaner which are very interesting; it is on Jaipur, however, that history, man and art have lavished all their attention. The city owes its existence to Raja Jai Singh II honoured as Sawai Jaisingh in token of his great philosophical learning. Jaisingh's main passion in life was astronomy. He had not only studied the subject but applied its principles in the building arts. He had a craving for expressing himself in stone. The city of Jaipur is built on the straight line principle, the main streets being as wide as 111 ft. It was Kipling who said later that the good people of America built their towns after the pattern of Jai Singh but knowing nothing of Jai Singh, they took all the credit to themselves.

Perhaps one of the most interesting monuments available in Jaipur is the Jantra or the Observatory. This is the largest among the five group of observatories which were built by Jai Singh in Banaras, Delhi, Mathura, Ujjain and finally at Jaipur itself. Jai Singh resorted to masonry as the medium for expression of his ideas and when he was once aroused, there was nothing to prevent him from expressing himself with unbounded energy. A great historian has told us that he 'bound

the girdle of resolution about the loins of his soul' and then set about his task. The Samrat or the Prince of Dials is a gnomon 90 ft. high, with a base 147 ft. long. For sheer accuracy, it is difficult to beat this observatory even today.

The Royal Palace is another place of interest to be seen at Jaipur. Known popularly as Chandra Mahal, it is seven stories in height and hums with activity all day round, for the place is not the mere residence of royalty but contains amongst its four corners shopping centres and market places also with the result that there is life eternal passing in the four corners of its wall. Perhaps the most important feature of the place is the Diwan-i-Khas—the Pitam Nivas (Winter Chamber), Rang Mandir (Hall of Pleasure), and Shobha Nivas (Hall of Brilliancy). All these places and monuments contain superb relics of a past which has vanished today, leaving behind thrills of beauty in their wake.

Round about 1803 came to the throne of Jaipur, Raja Juggat Singh whose wife Ras Caphoor, unfortunately for the state, squandered a lot of crown property. However, the private library of the Rajputs has remained with us. Among the tokens of great value and beauty is a picture of Sir Thomas Roe having an interview with Jahangir in 1616. There are also some old manuscripts in particular, four volumes of the translation of Mahabharata by Abul Fazal, which are today estimated to be worth round about £50,000.

The seductive palace garden is a thing which has attracted the attention of every passing tourist. The Rajputs took their clue from the Moghuls and considering the oppressive heat of the Rajputana desert for half the year round, they naturally showed weakness for all cooling devices in summer. The Moghuls built beautiful gardens and made the fullest use of all kinds of methods for ensuring running water. The Rajputs followed their example and built lawns, gardens, artistic showerbaths, small lakes within the palace walls, the

entire idea being to keep the place as cool as possible from the heat of the summer. It is stated that Raja Juggat Singh stayed away from the hub and activities of the palace in these lovely gardens and indulged in exchange of letters between the zenana and the garden through the good offices of a favourite dog. There is an interesting monument erected at this spot in memory of this dog.

The feeding of birds and beasts, pigeons and crocodiles in particular has invited comparison with other parts of the world. For example, the feeding of pigeons is reminiscent of what happens at St. Mark's Square in Venice. There is a special tank laid aside for the feeding of crocodiles and is in fact known as the crocodile tank. Besides, it is at Jaipur that we come across some of the most important relics of the old chivalry of the Rajput regime, particularly in the shape of ornaments and weapons, the former used by the women folk and the latter by the men. If you want to see some of the quaint weapons such as arms, knives and daggers and gold and silver embroidered sceptres, there will be no better place than Jaipur. The Albert Hall Museum which came into existence in 1876, was designed by Sir Swinton Jacob and which is Indo-Saracenic in style contains a wealth of relics which are of a fascinating nature.

Perhaps in Jaipur itself, it is the hall once popularly known as the Hawa Mahal (Hall of winds) which will catch your attention. Here we have what is known as the Heaven-Darting Tower (Swarga Suli) which was erected by Maharaja Ishari Singh to serve the purpose of seeing without being seen. This was necessary in the old days when the use of such powerful instruments as telescopes was lacking and when the threat of invasion at the hands of enemies was uppermost in the minds of the kings so that they built towers as high as possible into the sky which enabled them to have a bird's-eye-view of the world around them.

Another thing which strikes us at Jaipur is the

existence of innumerable and imposing Chhatris (Cenotaphs) built by the Rajputs to propitiate the memories of their ancestors and incidentally themselves. This was one way of immortalising their remains and keeping fresh in the minds of the people, the memories of their illustrious ancestors. The imposing structures found in the shape of domes supported on pillars and rich in carvings detailed almost all the epics from Hindu religion. They were of distinctive designs and one of the best survivors of this art is that of Jai Singh II himself.

A few miles away from the hubbub of Jaipur City lies Amber, a mass of majestic ruins, built on a hill top, a city set on a hill as it is popularly known. As an eagle's nest up the Kali Koh gorge, it is imposing in its solitude and is almost reminiscent of Akbar's Fatehpur Sikri, for, like Fatehpur, it is abandoned at the present moment and apart from its historical antiquities, there is very little of life in this place. Formerly, the last two miles of the journey were undertaken on the back of elephants. Now a beautiful motorable road has been built and the journey can be performed in comfort.

There is a certain warm beauty about the Amber Castle which is elevating; a peculiar warmth which however inspires a certain amount of awe in the visitor. There are several cubits to its stature. There is intricate workmanship, particularly on the bronze doors which are of exquisite value and amidst the walls of Amber resides the slumbering spirit of the past. Towards the sixties of the 17th Century, Mirza Jai Singh I built this city of Amber and boasted about its construction which incidentally reached the ears of Aurangzeb at the court of the Moghuls. Aurangzeb was naturally indignant at the idea that a small prince like Jai Singh should boast of any structure superior in elegance to anything the Moghuls had hitherto produced. The Moghul wrath came down on Amber but Jai Singh I covered the red stone pillars with a stucco over-all plaster and when the forces of Aurangzeb advanced,

they saw that an exaggerated opinion had been conveyed to them. Which in effect saved Amber from total destruction.

The ruling deity of Amber is the goddess Kali in whose memory a small temple has been built. The place itself is a maze in which one is likely to get lost. There are, however, beautiful paintings on the walls of the palace and there is a remarkable combination of the spiritual and material pervading the entire spirit of workmanship at Amber.

Jaipur is situated 695 miles from Bombay and 191 miles from Delhi. Convenient trains on the metre gauge section of the Western Railway ply in both directions making access to this place quite easy. There are three comfortable hotels at Jaipur, viz. the Jaipur Hotel, the New Hotel and the Kaiser-i-Hind hotel. No difficulty will be experienced in the matter of conveyance as it is one of the many places in India where the mode of transport is varied and besides cars and carriages, even elephants and camels can be hired for short trips. Such modes of transport are unusual to the foreign tourist. Anything novel is interesting. A camel or elephant ride in particular. A few aches and pains may be felt the next morning—but then it is worth it! A letter in advance to the Military Secretary to the Rajpramukh of Rajasthan will enable the issue of passes, etc., for visiting the various places, particularly the Albert Hall which require a permit for entry.

A visit to Jaipur brings back to your mind the ancient glory of the Rajputs and gives you an insight into a way of life which is fast disappearing. The Rajputs had certain traditions, to wit, chivalry, honour, patriotism, a high sense of respect for woman and so on. There was also a lot of colour and pomp and pageantry in the enlightened despotism practised. With the passing of the princes and the transfer of power to the people, much of that side of life has necessarily perished, which cannot be helped. But, then if you have succeed-

ed in having a glimpse of a section of India of yesterday, you would have learnt a good bit of life.

One of the prettiest places in Rajasthan is Udaipur, variously called 'the City of Sunrise', 'the Venice of the East' etc. The beauty of the town is heightened by the existence of a number of lakes which surround the town.

Udaipur owes its existence to Maharana Udaï Singh. Students of Indian history will tell you of the vicissitudes of the Rajputs when they had a rough time against the steam roller of Moghul imperialism. The devotion of a patriotic nurse who substituted her own son when sure murder was in sight and thus saved the life of young Udaï Singh is one of the glowing chapters of Indian history. That the pusillanimous Udaï Singh did not stand up against the might of the Moghuls while his illustrious son Rana Pratap Singh carved out a niche for himself in the annals of fame is another matter. But then to Udaï Singh goes the credit of founding a beautiful city. The Rajputs retain their own illustrious traditions. One of them is the descent from the sun-god—Surya bansi. Even today the Maharana is known as the Sun of the Hindus! Even today under the carved arches of the Royal Palace, the Maharana is literally worth his weight in gold. Every year, on his birthday, he is weighed in gold and silver which in turn is distributed as alms to the poor people. Yes, Rajputana is nothing if picturesque. More so, Udaipur!

Udaipur is reached by the Meter Gauge Section of the Western Railway from Delhi, Ajmer and Chittorgarh downwards. The journey is not long and is not likely to be tedious, particularly if you have a halt at Chittorgarh. On the other hand, if you are going from Bombay, you break at Ahmedabad where the meter gauge train waits for you and then go to Udaipur via Marwar Junction. Winter and monsoon are good for this trip. The summer is likely to be a little trying. The Rajputana desert is not very kind during the summer.

What about the stay at Udaipur? There is a good Hotel under State management, run on European lines which will look after your comforts quite adequately and also help you in arranging for sight seeing excursions, in getting passes and permits which should be acquired to visit the various palaces and other places of interest, which are not all of them otherwise accessible. There is also a private hotel—the Lake View Hotel—under good management.

The first thing which will strike you about Udaipur is the lakes. The Great Lake at Kankroli is the most reputed of them all. Situated at a distance of 35 miles in the Northern direction of Udaipur, it follows a good motorable road which makes an excursion to the Lake an exciting experience. The Nanchoki Bund is an interesting feature of solid massive masonry, 40 feet high in places, about 1115 feet long. On one side of the lake is a pretty little temple. The lake is utilised as a landing-place for flying boats. Another lake which you must see is the Eklunji Lake which is situated at a distance of about 14 miles North of Udaipur. The surrounding valley and ravine make the site of the lake most picturesque. The family deity of the Maharana of Udaipur resides in a sacred white marble temple attached to the Lake.

Then we have the Pichola Lake ($2\frac{1}{2}$ m. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ m.) on which the town of Udaipur itself rests. It is lovely to see a city built on a lake with houses, balconies and terraces jutting out into the water. There are a number of bathing-cum-washing ghats on this lake. The early morning gives you a glimpse into life as it begins in this city of ancient palaces when the women-folk stream forth in their gaudiest best to fill up water or do their ablutions on the ghats! There is a mass of colour in the desert land of Rajasthan and Udaipur steals the limelight without a shadow of a doubt!

Now for the Maharana's Palace. The Royal Palace according to a well known authority is an "imposing

pile of granite and marble, of quadrangular shape, rising at least 100 feet from the ground, and flanked with octagonal towers, crowned with cupolas. Although built at various periods, uniformity of design has been well preserved". It is the terrace which reveals the existence of the entire town of Udaipur standing in its majesty. The Temple of Jagannath or Jagdish (built about 1640) is an excellent instance of Indo-Aryan architecture. Bold friezes and artistic decorations adorn the ornamental tower. There is a shrine in front of the temple which contains a brazen image of Garuda.

The spirit of old Rajputana is here. There is something indefinable about the place which charms you. You may have witnessed better palaces and temples, wider and more picturesque lakes and yet, you pause and linger over the spirit of a civilization which is no longer extant. The glory has gone out of old Udaipur but a picturesque and interesting facade remains for you to see. You should not miss it!

No visit to Rajputana can however be complete without a glance at Ajmer. For Ajmer is conveniently situated being on the main line of the meter gauge section of the Western Railway and is actually only 276 miles coming down from Delhi. In fact, a night's run from Delhi brings you early next morning to Ajmer. If Jaipur and Udaipur have given us a glimpse of ancient Rajput culture, Ajmer shows us the decadent spirit of a Muslim culture which must, at one time, have flourished with considerable éclat.

In a way, Ajmer is a city of an unfortunate past. Like Delhi, it was, although to a lesser extent, in the way of every passing prince bent on conquest. A pebble in the river bed has no place before the advancing tide of an avalanche. Consequently, it had the misfortune of being sacked and pillaged on a number of occasions. Founded, according to tradition, as early as 145 A.D., it was in turn sacked by Mahmud Ghazni in 1024, by Mahmud Ghorî in 1193, was later on seized by Rana

Kumbha of Mewar till it passed to the Rathor Chiefs of Marwar. In 1556 Akbar took it—a prize conquest in the lap of the mighty emperor. Akbar and Shah Jahan made it what it is. Let us have a look:

Perhaps the prettiest spot in Ajmer is the artificial lake, Ana Sagar, originally constructed as early as the twelfth century but embellished with a row of marble pavilions on the embankment by Shah Jahan who as we have already seen had a genuine passion for marble. The bund and the public garden below it are both in excellent taste and while admiring the two we must pay our homage to Moghul genius for making life interesting and pleasant amidst otherwise dreary surroundings. Unfortunately, the monsoons are not always kind to Ajmer and when the rains fail in succeeding years, the Lake dries up and with it the beauty of the place is lost.

Akbar's associations with Ajmer were manifold. Intensely religious, shall we say occasionally superstitious, he paid frequent homage to the long line of saints of the Chisti family, coming from Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. While the Dargah had already been in existence, having been originally commenced by Altamash of Delhi and completed by Emperor Humayun, Akbar built a mosque in Ajmer, the inner part of which houses the tomb of the Saint Chisti. The Dargah and the mosque are places of holy pilgrimage by the followers of Muslim faith and at the annual fairs, the rich and the poor alike make contributions in cash and kind and help in the community feasting which follows. Akbar's Palace and a mosque called "The Hut of Two and a half Days", the name arising out of the tradition that it was built supernaturally within a record period are monuments worthy of attention, the latter structure in particular having undergone innumerable changes as the result of additions and improvisations. Horizontal arches and a fascinating screen are the features of this arch.

The Hindus however throng to Holy Pushkar, a lake situated about 7 miles from Ajmer on a romantic

road skirting the Ana Sagar Lake, then diving abruptly through a Ghat Section and emerging again into a valley surrounded by hills. The site of the Lake is enchanting. Crocodiles notwithstanding—the Hindus consider them sacred and safe!—a dip into the Holy Pushkar in the great mela (fair) of October-November is a 'must' if divine dispensation is to be obtained. However, reasonable precautions are always advisable during the non-rush period. For when other sources of feeding are denied, the crocodiles may favour succulent human flesh if only for a change!

There are numerous other places in Rajasthan which are worthy of a visit but if your time is limited and you cannot do more, you may just spend a day at Chittorgarh. It is incidentally on your way to Udaipur and since you cannot afford to miss that beauty spot, you may as well have a look at the celebrated fort of Chittor.

For in Chittor, each brick, each foot of ground is anxious to tell a tale. If walls had tongues, the ones at Chittor would shriek at you and regale you with all they have seen and heard. Chittor, the stronghold of the Rajput in his perennial fight against Muslim domination and Moghul imperialism, suffered considerably in the bargain and now epitomises the pride and chivalry of the Rajput male and the headstrong virtue of the female who invariably preferred death by self-immolation in fire to dishonour. Three times the Muslims ravished Chittor. The first siege took place in 1303 by Alauddin Khilji, when strategic considerations combined with romantic notions—the Queen Padmini, the wife of Raja Bhim Singh, was the reigning Helen of Troy of the times. The Rajput women performed a mass jauhar—self immolation—while the warriors, as was their tradition, donned their bridal saffron robes and sallied forth when certain death was their award! The second siege took place in 1535 at the hands of Bahadur Shah of Gujerat. The third was by Akbar. In each case,

the Muslims won a Pyrrhic victory. Akbar immortalised Jaimal and Patta which became household words in the annals of Rajput history. History repeated itself. The Rajputs may be broken but they would not bend. They may suffer but they would not accept defeat and Akbar quickly realised how hollow was the victory he had won!

The fort itself, perched on a glorious rocky ridge is 3 miles in length, rising about 500 feet from the surrounding flat country. Most of the surrounding places are in ruins but two famous monuments, the Tower of Fame or Kirti Stambh and the Tower of Victory or Jay Stambh have kept silent vigil throughout the years gone by. The first according to Fergusson probably belongs to the 12th Century A.D. and is dedicated to Adinath, the first of the Jaina Tirthankars. The second one—a column of 122 feet in height and 30 feet in width—was erected by Raja Kumbha of Mewar to commemorate his victory over Mahmud Khilji of Malwa. A poetic inscription says: "While the sun continues to warm the earth, so long may the fame of Kumbha Rana endure . . . May the varied history of his sway and the splendour of his dominion last for ever!!!" A flight up the stairs of these two towers is an interesting experience. The steps are rather high and you are likely to get a reaction next day! There are a number of palaces, and temples in Chittorgarh, principally the Palace of Rana Kumbha and the Temple of Virji, some of which are in ruins. A number of magnificent gates which must have served as milestones in the progress of the enemy, lead you on to the fort proper. A place which you must see is Mahasati, a place of cremation of Rajput ladies of royal blood who committed Sati as soon as they became widowed. Near by is also a cave-like structure where Rajput ladies performed Jauhar while the menfolk went out to have their last dance with death.

Such is the mood of Chittorgarh. It is something different from what you have probably come across

hitherto—hence, the request: go to Chittorgarh, you are not likely to regret it!

There are some other places in Rajasthan, too, places like Bikaner, founded by Bika in 1488, a state known for its munificence and hospitality throughout the West in particular; or Jodhpur, a very large state in Rajasthan containing the magnificent fortress-castle perched on an isolated rock, a number of fine Jaina temples, a good few lakes around the city and so on! That would of course depend upon your own choice—and the time at your disposal.

CHAPTER VI

BUDDHIST AND HINDU ARCHITECTURE

SITUATED at a distance of 28 miles from Bhopal on the main line of the Central Railway, Sanchi is accessible alike from Bombay and Delhi and any tourist interested in the cultural history of this ancient land would be advised to break journey if only for a day to understand the message of Sanchi. All trains can stop at Sanchi if required, provided previous notice is given ahead to the Railway authorities concerned. If the tourist is in no desperate hurry, he might, coming from Bombay, have a halt at Bhopal and then move on to Sanchi. While there is no hotel run on the Western style available at Sanchi, there are two dak bungalows under the charge of the Public Works Department of Bhopal and reservations can be arranged by previous intimation. While there is a steady stream of visitors to Sanchi, accommodation is usually available except when there are Buddhist festivals held on the premises. The local khansamas (cooks) attached to the Dak Bungalows can give you reasonably good fare at moderate rates.

To understand Sanchi, there are two factors which may well be stated. The first is that the work at Sanchi was initiated very early in a crude form and then improved upon at various stages, ranging from 250 B.C. to 25 A.D. During this period, there were political changes of a profound nature in India and three different dynasties were in power e.g. Asokan, Sungan and Andhran. Now, while Asoka gave unstinted support to Buddha, the same was not the case with the other two dynasties. Nevertheless although essentially Brahmanic, it redounds to the credit of both the Sungas and the Andhras that they gave considerable encouragement to

the work of improvements of the Stupas at Sanchi, which were essentially of a different faith from their own. This showed a catholicity of taste at the very dawn of civilisation.

The other point of interest is that the Buddhists had a veneration for any precincts created by them, which came to be revered and invested with sanctity. Hence it was not permissible to destroy any old structures even though the temper and temperament of architecture had changed. On the other hand, considerable amount of superimposition took place. Now, this may sound a jarring note but we have to accept it for what it is worth!

What exactly is a 'Stupa'? According to one authoritative definition, 'a stupa is a hemispherical monument of bricks or stone, surrounded by a stone railing, broken at each of the cardinal points by a monumental gateway, profusely sculptured. It is a commemoration of funerary monument, often erected on top of relics.' This will enable us to understand the monuments at Sanchi a little better.

The old structure in the shape of the tumuli of bricks at Sanchi was of an uninspiring nature. The masonry hemisphere was 70 ft. in diameter and 35 feet high. In the centre, space was kept available to serve as a receptacle of relics. On the summit of the structure was a wooden parasol (chhatrayasthi). Besides this there was a processional passage called 'pradakshina patha' for circumambulation which was an essential part of Buddhist ritual. A wooden railing—vedica—completed the structure.

The question may well be asked: Why Sanchi?

After the death of Buddha, the immediate thing which concerned his principal disciples was the propagation of the faith of the Buddha and for this purpose various kings and spiritual leaders selected bands of monks who would go far and wide to all the corners of

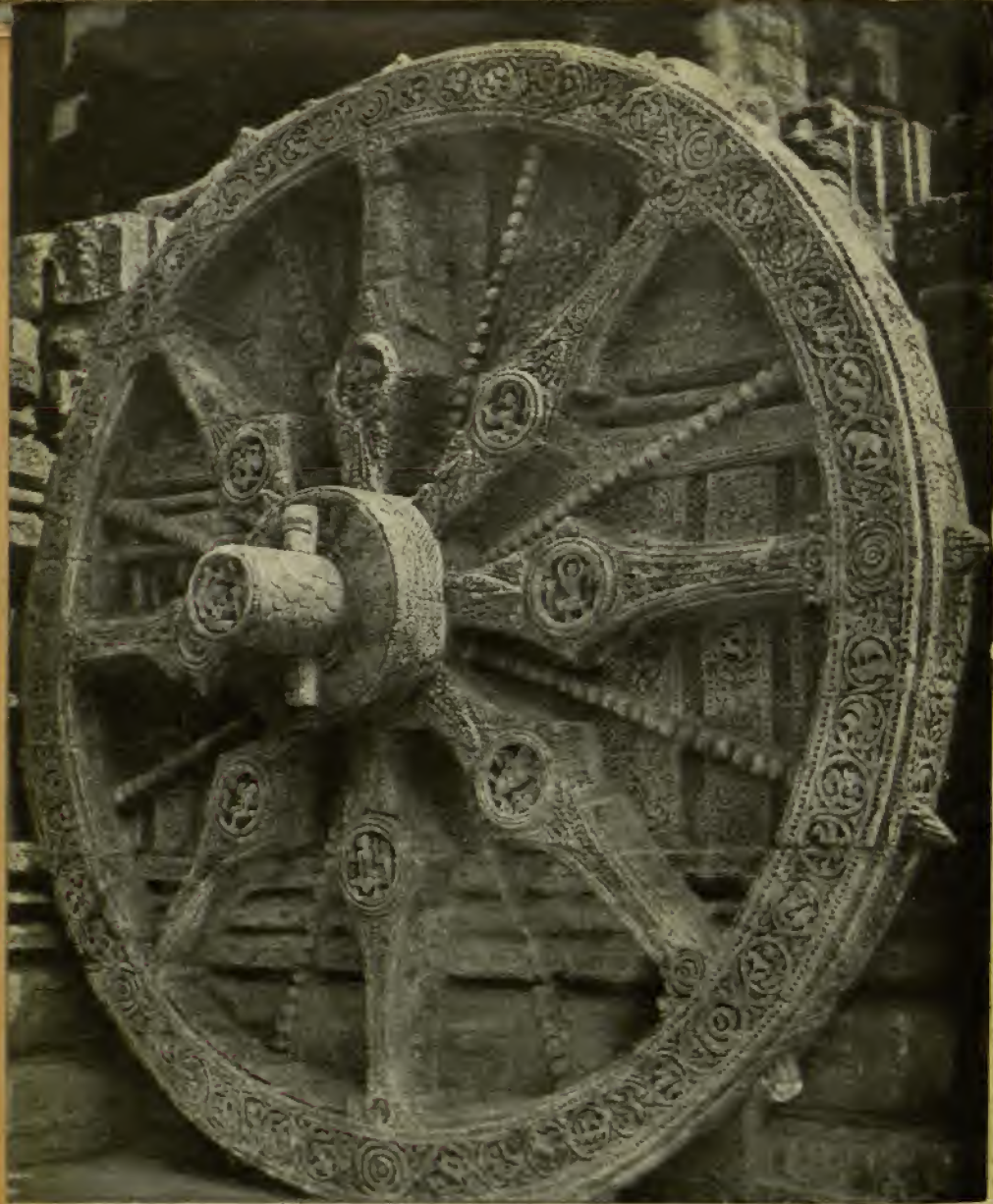
India to propagate the teaching of Buddha and then, since the word of mouth was likely to be lost, to inscribe on rock and metal slabs what have come to be known as the Edicts of Asoka.

When the Buddhist monks selected the mound or the promontory at Sanchi for their sanctuary, they were principally guided by the fact that only 6 miles away was the prospering town of Vidisa, the capital of Akram, a powerful Hindu kingdom. Vidisa was the base for the supply of men and materials so far as the building work at Sanchi was concerned. It is understood that Asoka in his earlier years had broken journey at Vidisa while going to take up ambassadorial duties at Ujjain. The path leading to Nirvana as an escape from the trials and tribulations of life and as preached by Gautama the Buddha had then to be taught to all mankind. The guiding spirit of Asoka must have had a hand in the selection of the site at Sanchi. The surroundings were peaceful and inspiring enough and at the same time, close proximity to an important centre was secured. This is usually a motif in Buddhist buildings in other places also; to wit, Ajanta and Ellora.

The main improvements at Sanchi meant the increasing use of stone in place of brick and wood, the last one having been discarded as a medium of building due to its extremely perishable nature. Similar changes round about this time were taking place at other important places also. By about 150 B.C., the work of reconstruction had begun and the main stupa was enlarged to about twice its size. The brick tumulus of Asoka was left intact. An area of another 120 ft. was added to the diameter and the total height reached was 54 feet. A terrace was added to the structure. The dome was surmounted by a superstructure consisting of a square railing enclosing a pedestal timber railing by a stone routing. The structure was colossal and sometimes we are struck by its sheer ponderousness. If the aim of the artificers was to inspire awe into the minds of the



KARLI CAVES: *Facade of the Buddhist cave. This rock-cut temple is one of the largest (88 ft. by 25 ft.) and most harmonious.*



KONARAK: *Bas-relief of a wheel on the Sun's Chariot*

This is one of the many wheels carved on the wide base of the temple consecrated to the Sun (1240). The temple represents the Sun's Chariot.



AJANTA: *Fresco of a Bodhi-sattva*



MADURA: *Corridor of the temple*

masses, they no doubt succeeded very much in their object.

One of the things which enters henceforth into Sanchi structures is the ornamental motif, in the shape of decorations of a florid nature on the imposing gateways on toranas (ceremonial portals). According to Brown, the artists responsible must have been in touch with Hellenistic schools of art thoughts. There are five gateways at Sanchi, four forming the main entrances to the main stupa and one as an isolated gateway. No part of the gateway was spared and there was a riot of decorative additions which were not necessarily an essential part of the structure. There was a galaxy of rich symbolism and imagery splashed on the gateways. On the North gate for example, we have decorations with small bas-reliefs profusely illustrating the Buddhist legend. True to the tradition of early Buddhism, Buddha himself was only shown symbolically and never in the human form. On the Eastern Gate, some of the symbols are the young elephant, representing Conception, the tree as the Enlightenment, the wheel as the First Preaching. The Great Renunciation is beautifully described: the riderless horse, for example moving towards the right, symbolising the riding away of the Buddha from his father's residence. On the other hand, in this austere and highly symbolic treatment of life, the sensuous element was by no means absent. The Yakshini on the Eastern Gate is a dryad of the forests, a nymph with intensely feminine voluptuousness, a forest fairy swinging from the branches to remind us of pantheistic worship, of the time when vegetable life was held sacred. The centre of attraction is the arms of the Yakshini twined in the branches and the foot lovingly touching the trunk, making her body almost a part of the tree and her full figure a symbol of fertility. Examples of this nature could be multiplied.

For the work between 25 B.C. and 25 A.D. there is a certain strain of consistency. The artificers were

local men from Vidisa (Besnapur) and while a change over was taking place in applied arts, they do not seem to have been perturbed at the prospect. According to one authority, the men were not masons but workers in minor and applied arts, applied arts which seem to be in a fairly advanced stage, even then. The decorative principle seems to have engaged their attention first and foremost. The combined mysticism and artistry of the toranas seem to have been attempted to stimulate emotions of a spiritual and artistic nature.

There are two features of Buddhist life which cannot escape our attention wherever there is any congregation of monks. The one is the Chaitya or temple for primarily ritual purposes which was utilised by the monks and the other was a kind of monastery or vihara, for the residence of the priests. While original worship may have been conducted under the blue skies or under the shade of a banyan tree, geography and commonsense must have combined to reach the conclusion of the inevitable need for a proper shelter if the faith had to be propagated in an orderly and organised manner. While the original structures were usually wooden, their sheer lack of durability must also have been appreciated by the men of the times. Sometimes shelter was sought in natural caves. This ensured seclusion and the necessary peace, far from the maddening crowd which were a prerequisite for worship. But then the caves were not always habitable and had often to be dug and hewn out of sheer rock which would not have been possible except for continuous State patronage. While a number of structures were built in and around Sanchi for this dual purpose, they have not survived intact today. For a better appreciation of these features, we will have to turn to Ajanta.

Let us have a last look at the Sanchi stupas before we go down the hill. Let us recall that, for various reasons, Sanchi was buried into oblivion and was com-

pletely forgotten for centuries. Like the caves at Ajanta, we had to rediscover some of our priceless items of cultural heritage. Sanchi is now coming once again into its own. The consciousness on the part of new India and the interest taken by Buddhist countries surrounding this country have supplied a new stimulus and it is hoped that the word Sanchi will one day stand as synonymous with a university of culture in the widest sense of the term.

How do we get to this vision of ancient India?

If you are starting from Bombay, you go in the afternoon by the Punjab Mail from Bombay upto a place called Manmad over the Central Railway. Change over to a metre gauge section by taking a connecting train and you are in a place called Aurangabad by midnight. This will be your focal point for further excursions.

There is a beautiful little hotel at Aurangabad run by the Central Railway authorities and in the comforts provided, cuisine and drinks supplied and amenities offered, it is probably the last word. There are grander hotels no doubt in India but this one is compact, neat and since it is small, the management is able to offer personal attention to its clients. The Hotel is designed in Saracenic style, the architect making ample use of the architecture of nearly two thousand years ago. The entrance arch and the pillars are archetypes of what you will later see in one of the caves at Ajanta. Both single and double rooms are available at the reasonable rate of Rs. 17 and Rs. 32 respectively. All bed rooms have sanitary fittings attached and hot and cold water running. The hotel taxi will most willingly meet you at the station by appointment.

Another but slightly more tedious approach is via Jalgaon in East Khandesh and then by car for a length of 54 miles. The distance between Aurangabad and Ajanta is about 65 miles but then the roads are better

and besides you are interested in establishing a base from which to fork out. Further, it is not only Ajanta that we have come to see. There are some other interesting places which are equally arresting from our point of view—Ellora, in particular. And then remember: Aurangabad itself boasts of a number of places of interest and since you are in Aurangabad, you might as well have a dip into antiquity.

Two itineraries are suggested. One is to devote a whole day to places in and around Aurangabad and Ellora and then go on to Ajanta the same day. Alternatively, you do Ajanta first and then the other places. Ajanta in any case is at least a whole day's job. That is, if you are a casual visitor. If your interest in aesthetics is deeper, well, there is no limit to the time you may spend in and around these monuments. I am not so sure if you would be in a hurry to get back at all. A number of hotel and train reservations have been cancelled in the past.

A few preliminary words about Ajanta itself. Says Laurence Binyon an admirer of the Ajanta art: "As we look back, over the world's art, are we not longest held and most surely satisfied by those forms which the imagination of a race has assembled to embody the drama of human destiny, the agonies and triumphs of the human soul and to which the genius of great artists has given embodiment? Here in such images, the creative design discovers a stimulus and scope for transcending the private reactions of a single mind."

For the Ajanta is something colossal, it is on a scale the like of which it would be difficult to come across in any part of the world. Remember: there is a mass of caves, viharas and chaityas, terms which have been explained earlier. A number of them have been embellished with frescoes. The work of hewing caves out of sheer massive rock is something fantastic and unless seen in person, difficult to visualise. Imagination literally stag-

gers on its uneasy throne! Why? The entire undertaking took centuries to accomplish and when taken along with the Ellora group, the work took about 800 years to complete. Try and remember that the first cave was excavated round about the second century B.C. when the rest of Western civilisation barring Rome and Greece was in a state of slumber.

Who were the men who accomplished this tremendous and magnificent task? Among one of the things which will puzzle you and upset already crystalised ideas is the conception of 'shilpiyogins' or mystic artists. A hint has already been given about this idea on a previous occasion while talking of Sanchi. The men whom Asoka and his successors chose were spiritualists first and artists next. The best of art according to us is pervaded by an aura of mysticism. The idea of Yoga in art is not foreign to us and by definition mysticism was not, according to ancient Indian tradition, divorced from art. In fact, the idea of art for the sake of art would have been anathema to our ancient philosophers. The ruling motto perhaps was 'art for the sake of God, art for the sake of Divine.' To attain His images by spiritual contemplation in visual arts was perhaps an urgent, obsessional compulsion with our mystic artists. Art was a *saddhana*, a vigorous discipline, a vehicle for the attainment of the ultimate spiritual salvation of man. To discover the eternal verities of life was the main aim of our artists and in Ajanta they have succeeded to an admirable extent. Hence, our stress on Ajanta as a cameo in our cultural heritage of which we can be justly proud!

Consider only the subject of selection of the site. These artists were aesthetes and they very well knew how to get about their job. The site of the Ajanta guarantees, among other things, the necessary seclusion needed for spiritual contemplation, a perfect scenic setting in a valley with a river rippling by, which inci-

dentally guaranteed a good all-the-year-round steady water supply, a nearness to the base—Paithan—from which the resources of men and materials could be made available with the least possible delay, so that work would not be held up on any account. If natural surroundings could inspire man to attain the highest spiritual values, the site of Ajanta was beautiful in the extreme.

Some foreign critics have been unduly harsh about the so-called lack of coherence of pre-conceived plan at Ajanta. There is a seeming chaotic complex of arrangements, which is likely to baffle the uninitiated particularly during his first visit. The underlying stream of unity is not always apparent. Hence M. Stochoukine: 'The composition is often putrid and we are left with a sense of splendid struggle rather than that of serene mastery.' Without being chauvinistic, one must state that the criticism is unjust. For the art at Ajanta indicates a way of life, the prevalence of a temperament, a succession of moods. The frescoes depict the entire gamut of human emotions. While most of the paintings give us a vivid picture of the Life of Buddha and provide a running commentary on the tales from the life of the master in the shape of Jatakas, the artist has not failed to splash across the walls and ceilings of Ajanta all possible scenes from life. As one author has pointed out, "Emotions are portrayed with faithfulness as if life were reflected in a mirror—sadness, pain, death-throes, love, sensuality, envy, fear, malice avarice, mischief and sorrow, all being shown with a realism which powerfully moves the spectator." The Ajanta in short is a cinematographic record of life. How men and women of the times lived, how they dressed, how they decked their bodies, how they furnished their houses; the food, the vessels, the flowers, the fruits, the fauna, the flora—well, nothing is left out. In such a presentation of the picture of life, there is bound to be a certain

amount of over-crowding as the result of over-enthusiasm at the vastness and vitality of human existence and if there is an apparent casualness in presentation and a certain amount of flooding, it may well be excused in lieu of the infinite variety of attitudes and the inexhaustible groupings furnished.

A further point. We are considered an ascetic people. There are lots of tales going around which have rightfully given rise to this impression. Pseudo-sadhus and fake fakirs standing for years on end on one foot or looking steadily at the sun every day or resting on beds of nails day in and day out convey an uncommon picture of life. These are often, though not always, cheap manifestations of a longing to achieve demonstrative divinity and to bamboozle the illiterate, the gullible who are sometimes taken in by some such naively spectacular feats. A vision of the living world in stone, with the aid of the paint and the brush is however a difficult matter. The teeming earth contains springing plants, sprouting flowers, birds, deers, elephants, the entire life of men and women with their sorrows and their earthly pleasures. Even the Renunciation of Buddha is not the feat of a frustrated and disillusioned individual who is 'fed up' with existence; it is not a feat of facile escapism because this life is too much with us; there is no manifestation of a scornful disgust with life and all it stands for. Even our asceticism is vigorous, not wasteful, it is the renunciation of a fighter and not a seceder, not a runaway. Then there is the wonderful mingling of the human and the divine at Ajanta which has indeed been the most tantalising and baffling thing for foreign critics to understand and appreciate.

If our artists had been ascetics in the accepted sense of the word, how could they have depicted the radiant, the resplendent women of Ajanta. The entire conception of woman at Ajanta should give our visitors fresh food for thought. The Eastern woman has generally been

associated with such ideas as humility and subordination to man. At Ajanta, emphasis is distinctly on woman's innate beauty and the Ajanta masters have fully utilised woman 'as their best decorative asset with brilliant zest and extraordinary knowledge.' No opportunity has been lost to bring her out.

What was the motive? Perhaps the sheer joy of painting them with 'no perceivable literary or religious intention.' Women indulging in all sorts of activities which befit women, adoring, dancing, singing, chatting, gossiping. But in every manifestation, in every revelation, woman was beautiful. Perhaps woman and ugliness seemed a contradiction in terms to our aesthetes of long ago. As one author whom I cannot help quoting because I cannot improve upon it, says: "In spite of her obvious reality one feels at Ajanta that woman is treated not as an individual but as a principle. She is there not female merely but the incarnation of all the beauty of the world. Hence with all her gaiety, her insouciance, she never loses her dignity and nowhere is she belittled or besmirched. Everywhere in this garden of flowers we behold the full blown rose in its pride and perfume—nowhere the trampled lily. Majesty and Power invest the women of Ajanta quite as clearly as the Mandorla of glory surrounds the saints of early Christian Art." Need we say more? The point I was trying to make was that our artists were spiritual and yet of the earth earthy!

Look at our nudes for examples at Ajanta—and compare them with the stuffy and artificial nudes manufactured by European artists in their city etchers. For the daring romantic European artist, the nude was symbolic of the revolt against convention, of the emancipation of woman from her shackles. The portrayal of the nude is natural in India. Maybe our climate, environment and economy have quite a lot to do with it. The fact remains that our nudes have a delightful ease

and animation about them. In many communities in remote and different parts of India, women, even today go about with their breasts bared to public gaze and no one thinks anything about it. In several provinces, women are draped in one piece of cloth only. Hence partial nudity, a *natural* phenomenon today, was quite an accepted fact then and the artist did not think anything about painting woman as he saw her. It was just a part of everyday life, that is all!

Purely an academic question but since it has been posed so often and not always answered with any degree of satisfaction, we might say a few words about it here. That is the question of influences. All pundits and professors of art take infinite delight in endless verbal badinage where influences are concerned. It is supposed to be erudition to enquire into this aspect. We will however cut the matter short. Take it for what it is worth but we feel that in the art at Ajanta there is little affinity to the Chinese and the Japanese. Perhaps there is a shadow of Hellenistic influence hovering somewhere around the pictures. I am however inclined to agree with Binyon that the art is thoroughly and intrinsically Indian but since it was Aryan in spirit, there is a more natural affinity to European art than to Far Eastern Art. But then as I told you, the issue is purely academic. There are tomes of erudition on the subject and if you are interested, I have no doubt you will turn to their pages with considerable gusto. In the matter of influence, we follow the philosophy of our own Aurobindo Ghosh, according to whom the creative force comes from an inner vision of the artist, a deeper intuition of his soul. Listen to this one: 'All Indian art is a throwing out of a certain profound self-vision formed by a going-within to find out the secret significance of form and appearance, a discovery of the subject in one's deeper self'. Of such a self-vision was born the art of Ajanta!

Such is the background against which you may view these thirty-two odd caves of which twenty-nine are viharas (monasteries) and the rest chaityas (places of worship). They form a stupendous cave picture gallery, unique in the history of art, rare in the history of civilisation, the like of which has not yet been produced by man. It is no use going into the individual merits and demerits of these caves. That would depend upon your own personal judgment. If you feel interested, you could make a longer stay at Ajanta itself. There is a comfortable Rest House run by the Hyderabad State and hospitality could be enjoyed at very reasonable rates. Many an artist have lingered behind, either to take pictures in details or to make copies of the frescoes, some of which are decaying and have been saved in good time from total extinction.

Progressing further we come to Ellora, to the famous Kailasa Temple and see the wonder of generations passed on from father to son. The Ellora is ageless and iconoclastic fury notwithstanding, it stands as a monument of the best which man is capable of conceiving and executing. "Colossal in size, intricate in plan, extravagant in decoration, enriched with roofs, caves, pillars, figures 'bas reliefs', entirely beautiful, it is hewn vertically out of the heart of the rock. A vast carved monolith", thus says a critic. Yes, but carved by what? Not by dynamite, not by modern machinery. It did not appear through divine dispensation as a gift from the Gods. It is a handiwork of man, toiling, sweating, working, day in and day out, year in and year out, century in and century out, man the embodiment of patience and perseverance. The temple is of Hindu origin, work commenced roughly about the 8th century A.D. and went on for ages, since time was never a factor of importance in our karmic computation of life. The stone walls as in many other places in India are adorned with scenes, depicting life from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

The caves proper have been divided into Buddhist, Jaina and Hindu. Special mention may be made of the Indra-Sabha at Ellora, the Cave of the River Goddess, the Dining Cave and the Carpenter Cave. The sight of a colossal Buddha, seated in the Cell, supported by lotus bearers can be exhilarating in the extreme.

What about Aurangabad itself?

Perhaps a day could easily be spent seeing Bibi-ka-Maqbara the mausoleum of Rabia Durani, the so-called imitation Taj, built by Aurangzeb in the memory of his wife, an imitation erected between 1650 and 1657 which unfortunately suffers badly by comparison; then see Panchak-Ki or water mill, an ingenious device for drawing water from a long distance and have a look at Aurangzeb's tomb at Raoza. Daulatabad fort needs a detailed study if one wants to appreciate its historical importance. The fort is only seven miles from Aurangabad and is built on a cone-shaped hill. There are three lines of fortifications provided within the fort and an enthusiastic guide is at pains to impress you with his historical erudition. Notable among the monuments is a minar 210 ft. high and 70 ft. in circumference at its base.

Time and again, in remote parts of India we come across gems of architectural beauty and then wonder how they came to be, who created them and how they have survived. The Black Pagoda temple at Konarak, the Shore Temple at Mammalapuram are perhaps two such examples which we can think of immediately. Khajuraho on the other hand gives us a feeling of amazement, for here is indigenous genius which is at once intricate and refined and although the temples are in a state of comparative neglect, yet they are quite well preserved.

How do we reach this conglomeration of temples? The breaking point both from Bombay and Delhi will have to be at Jhansi and then at a small station called Harpalpur on the branch line section of the Jhansi-

Manikpur line over the Central Railway. After reaching Harpalpur, you motor down to Khajuraho, a distance of 60 miles. As the railway journey is likely to be a little tedious, perhaps an alternative mode of transport would be to motor down from Jhansi itself over a distance of 100 miles. While there are no hotels at Khajuraho, the Rest Houses provide fairly good amenities and if due notice is given to the local authorities of Chhatarpur State, the visiting tourist is not likely to be inconvenienced. For a casual visitor, a full day's visit should suffice. For a student of art and architecture, there will be no end to the interest which he is likely to evince on this spot.

Some thoughts spring to mind immediately. Here is a string of 30 odd temples of high architectural value, buried in a sea of wilderness. In an otherwise barren soil, you come across an architectural oasis which materialises as if from nowhere. There is a touch of Alladin's Lamp about it. The initial shock is likely to be disturbing. All temples are contained within a range of about one square mile. They were constructed, according to historical records, during the regime of the Chandela Rajas, a powerful dynasty of rulers bestowed with Catholic tastes, rulers who could afford to give patronage to every religion within its orbit. This is indeed amazing. It is rare to find patrons of art having within its folds temples dedicated to such varied schools of thought as the Sivaite, the Vaishnavite and the Jaina. The conclusion is inescapable that the powers that be must have been bestowed with a taste of a high order and must have fostered seats of learning around them for, there is no manifestation of any narrow, sectarian religion anywhere around Khajuraho. The Chandelas must have been enlightened despots with imagination, for in their religious and spiritual zeal, they did not forget the basic facts of life and if they built temples, they also constructed reservoirs and tanks as objects of utility.

Patronage, yes, but what about artistic genius? The Chandelas were lucky indeed. For religious fervour and a well-stocked treasury are not the only things which result in the erection of beautiful monuments. The Chandelas must have requisitioned the services of a team of artificers throughout their regime so that the entire work of construction was over within a short span of 100 years from 950 to 1050 A.D., a feat reminiscent to some extent of the work of renovation undertaken at Sanchi between 25 B.C. and 25 A.D. during the regime of the Andhras when four gateways were covered with toranas of outstanding beauty!

Let us now have a closer look at Khajuraho and study some of its chief characteristics. The temples here have a definite individuality of their own. There is no customary enclosure wall here. Each temple is constructed on a high masonry wall and stands detached. Stress is not laid on stupendous proportions which awe and inspire the visitors but rather on the right proportions, graceful contours and rich surface treatment. For example, the largest temple has a length of only 100 feet. There is nothing imposing but then on the other hand, there is ample compensation in elegance.

Perhaps one of the most moving spectacles in this array of temples is the Khanderya Mahadeo Temple, the largest of the group, 109 feet in length, 60 ft. in width, 116 ft. high, dedicated to Siva, adorned with a throng of animated carvings depicting the entire gamut of human emotions and picturing scenes of all types from every day life on every possible available inch of space which could be found on which the artists could translate their fancy into fact. In this one temple alone, it has been computed that there are some 650 figures chiselled in stone, giving us a blend of 'ideal humans and divine personages'. Percy Brown contrasts them with the severity of Gothic niches found in the Churches at Rome and considers that the Indian figures are imbued with Hellenic grace. As in the case of the fres-

coes of Ajanta or the Orissan architecture at Konarak, so here, it is obvious that the artists in India were not ashamed of depicting earthy everyday life as it was led by all and sundry and carving it on stone or painting it in frescos. And when the lives of the Gods were depicted, they too were attributed human traits. Anthropomorphism was a common feature with us.

What strikes us at Khajuraho is the erotic motif in architecture. Maybe tantric rites of a mysterious nature were practised here in the days of long ago. Maybe our ancestors were gifted with extreme broad-mindedness so that they could tolerate the love play in stone, the like of which has not been seen anywhere else in the world. What then could be more edifying than the portrayal of woman—her infinite charms, her varied moods—in stone?

The beauty of Khajuraho lies in its interiors, which were designed according to requirements of ritual though it is not clear why economy of space was resorted to such an extent when vast space was available. The interior decorations are rich and afford functional and ornamental interest. An interesting feature is the modest size of the mandapa, which is only 25 ft. sqr., with 4 pillars one at each corner. The capitals of the pillars however have richly deserved and justified a spate of special treatment and beauty and ugliness. For here enchanting female loveliness and grace vie with grotesque figures which could make you sick. Strange and unpredictable were the moods of the artists of the day and if the idea was the moral triumph of beauty over evil, it has been achieved most successfully.

CHAPTER VII

A DASH THROUGH DECCAN

WHILE we have already had a glance at some of the most fascinating parts of the Deccan viz. the Ajanta and the Ellora branching off from Aurangabad, let us now have a quick glance at the rest of the Deccan which until recently was the domain of His Exalted Highness, the fabulous Nizam of Hyderabad around whose name a number of legends have already been woven and a number of yarns spun. For interest, you may have a glance at John Gunther's chapter on the Nizam in his "Inside Asia" or again at Dale Carnegie's "Little Known Facts of Great Men". Any number of interesting tales have been told about the Nizam; unfortunately they do not always stand the test of truth.

Like Mysore, Travancore and a host of other States in India, Hyderabad was fortunate in having a number of Diwans or Prime Ministers who really gave a fillip to the administration and established new traditions in the art of enlightened despotism. Hyderabad City itself which according to history was commenced by Mubarez Khan, the last Moghul Emperor and was completed by the Nizam-ul-Mulk is a city in a trapezoid form, has an area of 30 sq. miles, is in consequence very wide spread giving you a consciousness of spaces and comprises of a number of places of architectural and artistic interest some of which owe their existence to one of their earliest founders known as Sultan Muhammad Kuli (1581-1612). Each successive ruler has improved upon the town.

The State itself is admirably served by a net work of Railways, the former ex. Nizam State Railway Metre Gauge and Broad Gauge sectors, now an important

limb of the Central Railway Administration, headquartered at Bombay. The Railway runs throughout the length and breadth of the State and all the points of interest can be reached by convenient railroads and alternately by fairly well-maintained roadways.

Hyderabad, the capital of the State and some of its environs would naturally attract our attention first. First of all, the place abounds in a number of Hotels run on European and Indian style, the principal ones being Percy's Hotel, the Rita and Mayfair Restaurant. Alternatively, you could join the Secunderabad Club on Bolarum Road as a temporary measure and stay in the Club which has a number of single and double rooms available at its disposal with all facilities found on the premises. There are any number of clubs and places of entertainment in Hyderabad and Secunderabad and there are so many places to see and things to do that the possibility of your getting bored are quite remote.

Now let us see what Hyderabad has to offer. Situated beautifully on the banks of the River Musi, a tributary of the Kistna River, Hyderabad boasts of places cultural, historical and architectural which will arrest your attention at once. The Osmania University which takes pride of place is about 6 miles away from the city and is situated amidst picturesque surroundings which really inspire a spirit of academic interest. There is something elevating about the atmosphere of the University. Founded in September 1911, named after the present Nizam, it conducts graduate and post-graduate courses in almost all the faculties and the standard of scholarship is consequently high. Urdu is the medium of instruction but English is compulsory.

The local population are justly proud of the famous broad street known as Pathergatty, literally 'the stone-causeway' which runs through the city from North to South, from the Afzalganj Gate to the Aliabad Gate. At the junction of the four roads about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from it is



SRAVANA BELGOLA: *The Gomateswar*



HALEBID



HYDERABAD: *Kutb Shahi Tombs*

BIJAPUR: *Gol Gumbaz*





VIJAYANAGAR: A flourishing town in the 16th Century.
Vithoba Temple.

View of a sacred tank in the South



the famous monument of a magnificent rectangular building known as Char Minar, 186 ft. high and 100 ft. wide on each side. It is supposed to have been built in 1591 and is a chef d'oeuvre of Kutb Shahi art. There was a time when plague was raging in Hyderabad. When the epidemic subsided, the powers that be built this monument as a thanksgiving to God. Atonement in another garb!

On the West of the Char Minar is the famous Mecca Masjid where the Nizam still goes for his evening prayers. There is something solid about this structure; the first impression is one of endurance, coupled with strength. The gateway is understood to have been completed by Aurangzeb in 1692. There are four minars and five arches grandly proclaiming the existence of the Masjid from a long distance.

To the south of the Char Minar is the Chaumahalla Palace alleged to have been modelled on the lines of the Shah's Palace at Teheran. Important state banquets and other functions were held in this Palace in the days of long ago. There are a number of quadrangles one leading to the other. Another place of interest is the Palace of the late Sir Salar Jang, one of the ablest rulers of the State from 1853 to 1883. In the North East quarter of the City is the Purani Haveli or the old Palace, built by Asif Jah Nizam-ul-Mulk. Then comes the Faluknuma Palace, in the south of the city of Hyderabad, built in the 19th century at a cost of 35 lakhs of rupees. It is not open to the public although passes may be obtained from the aide-de-camp at King Kothi. The Palace is a mass of beautiful paintings, books, vases, marbles, candelabras, carved balustrades and the like. No item of oriental fancy has been left out. The facade is in Grecian style and the situation itself on a terrace with artistically laid out flower beds is arresting. The pretty vestibule is fitted with marble seats, surrounding a marble fountain.

Did I tell you about the innumerable lakes in and

around Hyderabad? They are pretty little capsules of delight and while assuring water supply throughout the year, they afford a pleasing sight to the visitors. Perhaps the prettiest of them all is Osman Sagar, a large gravity dam preserving the water of a big dam known as Gundipet Tank, situated ten miles from Hyderabad. It is an exquisite example of modern engineering skill. Another beautiful lake is the Himayat Sagar Lake about 3 miles away. The Meer Alum, eight miles in circumference has another interesting dam to boast of.

While there are a number of public gardens, museums, etc. too many in fact to permit enumeration, there is one museum—the Salar Jang Museum—which deserves special attention. While much is bizarre and the collection is not always in good taste, there are some rare items from the Indian point of view which would interest you. There is a beautiful collection of original Indian manuscripts, of Indian music pictorialised, of ancient costumes, weapons etc., which are worth their weight in gold. For a personal collection of an individual, it is a unique gallimaufry and the visitor would get a glimpse of things Indian, if only he can manage to divert his attention from the mass of material available before him and concentrate his attention in the right direction.

Now, the beauty of Hyderabad is supplemented by that of Secunderabad, about six miles North of Hyderabad which in the old days contained one of the largest military stations in India. Here we see the Hussain Sagar Lake, a beautiful sheet of water, extending over an area of four square miles. Secunderabad, more accurately Lallaguda, was the old headquarters of the Ex. Nizam's State Railway and is now one of the principal divisional headquarters of the Central Railway. Besides the Railway Locomotive and Carriage and Wagon Workshops, it contains a modern shopping centre, a number of picture houses, clubs, hotels etc. Bolarum, the Parade Ground, the Cantonment Garden, the Edward

Memorial Hospital, the Railway colony are bound to interest you.

The interest in Hyderabad is however inexhaustible. The beauty of Hyderabad is that one can always arrange for a number of excursions from that focal point and get through quite a large number of places by road. Perhaps the two which are the nearest and the most fascinating, about 5 miles from Hyderabad are the Golconda Fort and the Tombs of the Kutb Shahi Kings. Golconda has figured prominently in history books. Its diamond mines had held a sway over men's hearts. For the Moghuls of Delhi, Golconda was one more thorn in their sides, as they were intensely jealous of the Kutb Shahi Kingdom which held its sway in the Deccan from 1507-1687. Golconda, the capital of the Kutb Shahi's is a formidable, sinister looking, almost impregnable fortress which could not have yielded to the weapons in existence in those days. For the walls and bastions were made of solid blocks of granite and the fort was surrounded by a strongly built crenellated wall. There were eight gates originally and they made approach none too easy. Aurangzeb, the Viceroy of the Deccan staked his all and laid siege to the fort in 1560 and took it in 1687 and then too in treacherous conspiracy with Mir Jumla. Passes should however be obtained in advance as approach is not otherwise permitted freely.

The King's Tombs are numerous in number and follow a certain pattern. "The general plan of the tombs at Golconda is a dome standing on a square base, which is surrounded by an arcade of surrounding arches. . . . Each large tomb has its mosque, usually a hall. . . . flanked by minarets on either side."

One of the places of interest in the Deccan is Bidar. Bidar fort is one of the greatest, the strongest and the best preserved monuments of the Bahmani period. It stands on an eminence in the rolling plateau and commands the country three hundred feet below. It was begun by Ahmad Shah Wali Bahmani in 1428 A.D. and

took six years to complete. It is entered from the south-east by a zig-zag passage protected by three gate-ways. The entrance gate is called the Sharza Darwazah, the name having been suggested by two lions carved on the buttresses.

Inside the fort are a number of monuments of archaeological interest e.g. the Rangin Mahal which has two square halls of considerable dimensions, with large apartments, each having an extensive court and a large number of vaulted rooms. The places of interest are the Sola Khamb Mosque i.e. sixteen pillared mosque, reservoirs, the Tarkash Mahal and the Gagan Mahal. The most important feature of the fort is its walls which have a circumference of 4,500 yards. There are massive bastions, thirty-seven in number, at frequent intervals and the majority of them are surmounted with guns, the workmanship of which reflects credit on the skill and knowledge of those days. The bastions have loopholes for guns and muskets of various sizes. The Bari Top (Large Gun) is a magnificent piece of artillery, the circumference near the muzzle being 11 feet and the bore 1' 8" across.

Bidar is now identified to have been built on the same site as the "Vidharba" of Sanskrit literature, the same place where, according to Mahabharata, Nala came to find his bride, Damayanti. Bidar was the capital of two Muslim dynasties, known as the Bahmani and Barid kings. For more than two centuries Bidar remained an important centre of Muslim power and a constant challenge to the supremacy of the Moghuls in Delhi. Finally it was subdued in 1656 by Aurangzeb. Fifteen kings ruled at Bidar and among them was every type familiar to the reader of Eastern literature. The founder Ahmad Shah was a holy man and left great traditions behind him.

The town of Bidar stands on a beautiful plateau 2,330 feet above the sea level; its situation is picturesque and its climate bracing. The origin of the town is

rather intriguing. Ahmad Shah Wali is supposed to have notice a dog pursuing a hare. The bravery of the hare in defying the wrath of a dog amazed him. Such a land was indeed worthy of settlement. Hence: Bidar. Meadows Taylor has stated that there is no more healthy or beautiful site for a city in the Deccan than Bidar. As regards the character of Ahmed Shah, it could be judged from the inscription over his tomb which says:

“Should my head ache, my remedy is this;
a cup of wine, and then I sip of bliss.”

The ruler who actually made history for Bidar was Khwaja Mahmud Gawan. Unfortunately this was responsible for his downfall. In 1656, after a siege of 27 days, Prince Aurangzeb took Bidar. It remained in the possession of the Mughals till the first of the Nizams declared his Independence, when it submitted together with the other Deccan forts.

On the Eastern precincts of Hyderabad stands Warangal, presumably a corruption of the original ‘Orukhal’ which means “One-rock”, the reference being to the solid, massive cliff which stands at the centre of Warangal fort. Two things attract our attention immediately in Warangal. The first is the Thousand Pillared Temple of Anamkon and the second is the Fort itself.

The Kakatyas, the Rajas of Warangal, whose ancestry is shrouded in myth and legend must have been prolific builders and their buildings were imbued with considerable strength and vigour if the work left behind at Warangal alone is any indication. It is a pity the temple was in a state of decay for some time till attempts were recently made to resuscitate it. The pillars of the temples at Palampet, Warangal and Anamkon show solidity and a sense of proportion to the height of the buildings and the heavy superstructure and in spite of their thickness, the pillars have an extremely symmetrical form and rise to considerable height, giving a general air of loftiness to the whole building. The door-

ways, screens, pillars are profusely and lavishly decorated. The arrangement is stylist and the carvings refined. The main block of the temple consists of three shrines and a hall and belongs to the year 1162 A.D. according to the inscription.

The Fort at Warangal is supposed to have been commenced by Ganpati Deva and completed by his consort Rudramma. The defences have been cunningly thought of. The fort has two walls—the inner one of stone and the outer one of mud surrounded by a deep moat. There must have been a third wall of defence also. In a flat terrain, the provision of extra precautions was amply justified. An interesting feature of the stone wall is the huge blocks of granite and the provision of four gateways, with lion images carved on pillars. There are traces of a large temple within the fort, commenced presumably by Ganpati Deva but never completed.

Palampet, also in Warangal District, boasts of an array of temple architecture which you cannot afford to miss. The place is picturesque in the extreme, the hills, and the luxuriant vegetation and the sheets of water adding considerably to the beauty of the place. Somehow, possibly due to their remote geographical situation, the temples of Ramappa have escaped the notice of visiting tourists. The main temple is enclosed by a low but massive wall, 9 feet in height, $6\frac{1}{2}$ in the thickness. Exquisite sculptures of Dvarpalas and figures of Gods decorate the entances. The main temple stands on a raised platform. A striking phenomenon here is the provision of bracket architecture which displays near life-sized female figures of astonishing beauty and grace. While the postures are striking and youthful, the facial expressions are somehow not very pleasing. The sculptures within the temple depict tales from the Ramayanas and the Puranas. The ornamentation of the columns is subtle and rich. As one author has said: "No chased work in gold or silver could possibly be finer."

The spirit of the temple is Vaishnavite. The cult of Krishna, playing with the Gopis has fascinating possibilities and these have been fully exploited here. The scenes are idyllic and romantic. While the Gopis bathed, Krishna walked off with their clothes. A lot of poetic fancy has been woven around this and many similar incidents.

Talking of lakes, there are two which deserve special notice. The Ramappa Lake is about 10 miles in circumference. Its bund is an excellent example of engineering skill of the Kakatiya Kings. Then there is Pakal Lake, which is exquisitely surrounded by ranges of wooded hills which afford some very good shooting and fishing to the sportsman.

Turning northwards, we reach a fascinating point in the Hyderabad State called Nizamsagar Dam. Built across the Manjira river, the major tributary of the Godavari, the dam is situated 90 miles north of Hyderabad. It is accessible both by road as also by Railway. Some of the statistics about the dam are amusing. Having a catchment area of 8,376 square miles, a height of 158 ft. with 28 flood gates, the dam can irrigate 354 villages and the gross area commanded by the various canals runs into 5,36,537 acres. This imposing structure was built at a cost of 209 lakhs of rupees and while the work was commenced in 1920, it was completed in 1928 and stands as a major contribution of His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad.

From the tourist's point of view, Nizamsagar Dam is a beauty spot and visitors from all over flock to this place to have a glimpse of the colossal engineering work which stands before them. The principal object of the scheme was irrigation, manufacture and marketing of sugar and the present installation of the Nizam Sugar Factory, a few miles from Nizamabad is the result of this scheme.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ENCHANTING SOUTH

COME with me down South now.

We may divide this trip into two parts for the purpose of convenience. In the first, we have a glance at some of the places in Mysore State; in the second, we have a rapid tour, time permitting, of interesting architectural beauties of Madras State which we have not covered anywhere else.

Shall we start with Mysore proper?

This admirable little state is renowned throughout India for its able administrators, for some of the finest sights of a picturesque nature, for neatness, cleanliness and a high standard of living even in the villages, of the presence of a net work of roads and abundant supply of electricity because of natural resources and a salubrious climate almost throughout the year because of an ideal geographical situation. The general elevation ranges from about 2000 ft. above sea-level. Man and nature have combined to make the Mysore State a most admirable habitat particularly after retirement.

Mysore itself has a number of charms. Situated at a distance of 86 miles from Bangalore, connected by railway and an admirable motor-road, it boasts of a number of excellent hotels run on European lines e.g. Hotel Metropole run by the State, Hotel Carlton, Hotel Savoy etc. In Mysore as also in Krishnaraja Sagar which you are bound to see later, you will have a glimpse of hotels run under State management, a most admirable experiment as the standard of hotels is generally high and no pains would be spared by the authorities to make your stay as pleasant as possible. Besides, Mysore has a number of good clubs such as The Mysore

Club, Mysore Sports Club, Cosmopolitan Club, etc. There are of course a number of picture houses to keep you entertained.

Mysore wears a festive appearance on two occasions in the year, one the birthday of the ruler and the other, the Dassera holidays, the final day of the Navratri (9-day-festival) being the culmination point when the entire place is flood lit, Mysore goes really gay for once, crowds of visitors pour in and His Highness rides in state and the entire glory of Mysore is paraded before the masses. That is really the occasion to visit Mysore. The Maharaja's Palace which is a famous monument conceived along Indo-Saracenic lines, with decorative details which are 'Hoysala', puts on a wonderful garb of a fairy land. The piece de resistance in the palace is the throne. The legend—popular imagination being generally fertile with us!—has it that the throne belonged to Pandus of ancient lore. Originally fig-wood, with ivory overlaid, the ivory has since been plated with gold and silver and on it are neatly carved Hindu mythological figures.

Mysore boasts of a number of public places, among which may be mentioned the Jaganmohan Palace and the Art Gallery, the Lokaranjan Palace, a summer resort, Lalitha Mahal and the exquisite gardens surrounding it, the Palace Garage and the Royal stables, the Zoological Gardens, the silk and sandal oil factories, etc.

Perhaps the most interesting spot in Mysore is Chamundi, the relic of the 'two demons' 'Chanda' and 'Mundi' who are alleged to have been killed by the family goddess Chamundi of the Wadiyars. This is a rock hill about two miles south east of the fort and contains one of the oldest temples of Mysore along with a tower and a lake. On the way, you come across a colossal figure of a bull called Nandi, which has been cut out of solid rock—a most impressive monument indeed! On the hill is another beautiful palace of His

Highness.

At a stone's throw from Mysore, by a good motorable road is the world famous dam and terrace gardens of Brindavan at Krishnaraja Sagar, a reservoir 49½ Sq. Miles with a dam 1½ miles long and 130 feet high, built across the river Cauvery. A wonderful piece of engineering skill, it was designed for irrigation purposes and also to regulate the supply of water to Sivasamudram where Mysore produces the bulk of its electric supply. The place is exactly ten miles from Mysore. There is a beautiful hotel on the site which overlooks the terrace gardens. The cuisine and the bar are excellent attractions and the rooms and the equipment leave very little to be desired. All tastes are catered for and the state management have to be congratulated for maintaining a uniformly high standard throughout. The rates are about Rs. 18 per day per head, a little on the high side but considering the amenities offered, not unreasonable at all. As regards the gardens themselves, they are a sheer delight when flood-lit, as they are on every Saturday and Sunday these days. Artificially designed and beautifully maintained, they attract throngs from all parts of the world and the neighbouring villagers have a grand time of it and get endless amusement on week-ends. There is boating on an artificial expanse of water below the gardens. A place which it would be definitely worth while to spend the weekend.

We might now return to Bangalore. The amusing thing about Bangalore is that while it has nothing very wonderful to offer, everyone likes to go there. There is a quaint charm about the place which sometimes eludes description. First, the climate. Situated on a plateau about 3000 feet above sea-level, Bangalore is delicious throughout the year. In the monsoons the thin drizzle, a heavenly breeze and shady skies combine to make it a really charming place for a quiet time. Then the prices. Time was when they were deliciously

low. Then came the war—and inflation. Even so, things are reasonably cheap today and Bangalore frantically clings to the age-old sobriquet of being a Pensioner's Paradise. The population of retired people in Bangalore is on the high side. Then the cleanliness of it. I think Bangalore is one of the neatest places in India—which in itself is an attraction. Then, there are a number of hotels like the Central and the West End and a galaxy of guest houses which are always ready to welcome you and offer you fair board at fair rates! The Cantonment area has a number of nice restaurants, picture houses, bars etc. The accent is on amusement. There is Jalhali at a stone's throw which has an Air Force and Military centre. In the war time, the 'boys' definitely had the time of their lives at Bangalore.

Of course, there are spots. I consider personally the Cubbon Park an achievement of which any state could be proud. One can think of wide, open spaces in Bangalore. There is no dearth of elbow room. The Cubbon Park houses within its precincts gardens beautifully and artistically laid out, government buildings amidst surroundings which please so much that they sometimes preclude work, a government museum, a public library, statues, bandstands, restaurants—well, very little is left out! You could spend a day roaming around the Park and not feel bored about it, for there are plenty of quiet picnic spots here as also in Lal Bagh, another popular pleasure and picnic garden. The garden is supposed to have been laid down at the time of Haider Ali with a number of tropical and sub-tropical plants.

Perhaps a beauty of Bangalore is the names given to its various residential parts variously described as Cook's Town, Fraser Town, Cleveland Town, Richards Town etc. Besides this, there are a number of places which you must see e.g. the Maharaja's Palace, the Indian Academy of Sciences, the Hindustan Aircraft Factory, the newly opened Telephone Factory, the Army

Headquarters at Jalhali—oh, there is plenty doing in Bangalore, only it doesn't seem so spectacular on the face of it. And of course, the good old Petta, as the City area is popularly called.

And finally the people of Bangalore will delight you. As in Malabar, you feel lazy in Bangalore and after a heavy lunch, the need for a prolonged siesta is paramount with the result that work is at best a necessary evil which somehow has to be gone through. The climate is so good and life so easy that you could count your blessings over a hot cup of coffee at the innumerable coffee houses where you foregather at any time of the day!

A must in your itinerary if you have come to Mysore State is the world famous Gersoppa or Jog Falls. A convenient point for starting for these falls is from Shimoga station. There is a nice motorable road and seats could be easily arranged by prior intimation to the Proprietor, Motor Bus Service at Shimoga. There is a good, comfortable Dak Bunglow at the site and permits for occupation have to be obtained in advance from the Executive Engineer, Kanara Distt. at Karwar. There are four falls in all and they have been variously described as the Raja or Horseshoe, the Roarer, the Rocket and La Dame Blanche. The names are not as fanciful as they sound. The Rocket for example has to be seen to be believed. It is literally jet-propelled with foam which according to one writer, 'burst like fire rockets into showers of glittering drops'. Similarly, the Roarer is constantly attempting to justify its name as the water always keeps rushing down a serpentine channel into a kind of cavern. Paths are available for reaching the foot of the falls and this is something which must always be attempted, although the return journey is likely to be trifle arduous. The Watkins Platform has been admirably designed to have a gorgeous view of the Falls.

When should you visit the Falls? The monsoons

are delightful but the place is often surrounded by a heavy mist which may be fascinatingly romantic and at the same time deprive you of a good view. The season before the rains is probably the worst as the water is likely to dry up in certain parts. Perhaps the best time would be immediately after the rains.

The geographical books insist on saying it and this is true. The Gersoppa Falls, believe it or not, are the highest in altitude and they surpass even the breathtaking Niagaras. But not in volume. The Falls are formed by the Saraswati River which with a breadth of about 250 yards flows over a cliff of 960 ft. high in four separate falls.

Belur is a small place situated about 25 miles to the north-west of Hassan on the Metre Gauge Section of the Southern Railway on the Mysore-Arsikere Branch line. Belur is famous for its ancient Chenna Kesava temple. Unfortunately, the conveniences are not very many, although there is a fairly regular bus service connecting the town with the railway station and there are travellers' bungalows at Belur. According to historical evidence, the architecture at Belur is attributable to the Hoysala King, Vishnu Vardhana and the temple was supposed to have been designed and completed round about the year 1117 A.D. According to legend, the image was imported from Chandradrona, literally, the Crater of the Moon. One writer says, "Belur temple like others of its kind contains numerous circular motifs which have been skilfully used in the service of religion. If amongst these secular subjects, the female form has been freely used, it is because of its abiding aesthetic value." If there is such an expression as 'Poetry in Stone', it is indeed perceivable at Belur, particularly in such magnificent figures as the one entitled 'Beauty with the Mirror' or again 'The girl and her parrot', and the Madanakai images which are famous throughout India. The only point for criticism is that the artists at Belur have depicted certain patterns of

beauty which are, however, slightly different from the recognised ones, depicted at other places such as Ajanta, Sanchi, Khajuraho, etc.

The Chenna Kesava temple is a single-celled temple and measures 178 ft. by 156 ft. and has been raised on a platform about 3 ft. high. The main structure which is a homogeneous architectural unit consists of the usual three parts—the garbhagriha, or the sanctum sanctorum, the sukhanasi or vestibule, and navaranga or the central hall with three entrances. Here again on the walls are depicted ancient illustrations from the stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata as we have at Ajanta, frescoes depicting tales from the jatakas or the life of Buddha. There are a number of other temples also at Belur but they are all relatively of lesser importance and at the same time they are worthy of a visit once you are at Belur. According to Fergusson, "The Great Temple consists of a very solid vimana, with an antara-ala or porch; and in front of this porch, a mahamantam-pam, of the usual star-like form, measuring 90 ft. across". Fergusson has also commented on the very rigid disposal of mythological figures and rich carvings supported on a frieze of elephants.

Since you have been to Belur, the next halt is Halebid literally at a stone's throw from Belur—10 miles away from Belur and 18 miles by road from Banavar Railway Station on the Bangalore-Harihar section of the Southern Railway.

Halebid is derived from two Kanarese words, 'hale' meaning old and 'bidu' meaning capital, another relic of the Hoysala Kings, a dynasty which, according to historical evidence takes its foundation from about the year 1006 and seems to have ended in 1343. According to history, Virasomeswara appears to have been the founder of Halebid round about the 13th century. Since legend could not be divested from depicting motives to the building of temples, according to tradition the king was afflicted with leprosy and had to

retire to the 'Mountain of Flowers' where he did penance to Siva as a result of which he was cured. Since the God had to be appeased, the result was the famous temples at Halebid in honour of Siva. The temples have suffered considerable destruction at the hands of various visitations from the Muslim rulers particularly from Delhi. However, the two remaining temples are quite remarkable and are known as the Kedareswara and Hoysaleswara (literally, lord of the Hoysalas). The Hoysaleswara temple stands on a terrace 5'-6" in height, is paved with large sized slabs and the temple itself measures 160' by 120' from north to south. Nandi or the bull seems to be the favourite guiding motif in Mysore State as we have already seen at Mysore in the Chamundi Hills. According to Fergusson again, "some of these friezes are carved with a minute elaboration of detail which can only be reproduced by photography and may probably be considered as one of the most marvellous exhibitions of human labour to be found even in the patient east. Here the artistic combination of horizontal with vertical lines and the play of outline and of light and shade far surpass anything in Gothic art."

Let us now turn to the Madras State.

About 32 miles south of Madras along the palm-fringed coastlines, we come to the shore temples of Mammalapuram, a relic of Pallava Architecture (600-900 A.D.) History and legend have combined to invest Mammalapuram with a halo of glory! Any why not? Once upon a time, Mammalapuram must have been an important sea-port and it was probably a link between the Far East and India, even as Konarak and Somnath must have been in the days of long ago. There was considerable exchange of materials and culture between India on the one hand and Java and Cambodia on the other in those days. The story of shore temples in India at present in various stages of decay, makes fascinating, nay romantic, reading. It is now certain that

in the days of long ago Mammalapuram must have been a flourishing port and a big town. Although the administrative seat of the Pallavas was Conjeevaram at a distance of about 40 miles from Mammalapuram, it was here that the founder, Mahamalla, started a process of hectic temple building, at a site near the Palar river, temple building which involved excavation and quarrying out of natural rock, reminiscent of glorious sculpture of Buddhist times. Though a good bit of the structural architecture here has perished, it has left behind traces which would indicate that this indeed was an important entrepot in the days gone by.

Perhaps we can revive the glory that was Mammalapuram. As at Somnath, we may well ask: "Why Mammalapuram?" Various explanations can be given. Mammalapuram was already an important sea-port. It was not far away from the Capital. Belief in water worship probably played an important part with the Pallavas as also did their faith in Naga or serpent cult. There are fascinating facets of allegorical representations and rock cut dramas. There is a piece of sculpture which has been wrongly termed as Arjun's Penance when it is a representation of the River Ganges issuing from its source in the Himalayas.

Among the architectural beauties, mention may first be made of the mandapas, ten halls, with approximate dimensions as follows: width of facade 25 feet, height 15 to 20 feet, depth 25 feet and pillars 9 feet high. It is apparent that the Pallavas did not aim at grandeur in their sculpture. Nor is the result a stunted piece of art. On the other hand, the mandapas have retained both grace and proportion. There is a character of design which shows in its execution good architectural qualities and the disposition of sculpture is something to admire. On the facade, we have decorations of Chaitya architectural motifs. For the first time perhaps at Mammalapuram we realise that the rock-cutter, the artificer who did the job of excavation with chisel



MYSORE: *Demon of Chamundi*



MAHABALIPURAM: Monolithic monuments

Backwaters of Travancore-Cochin



and hammer was also, if not primarily, a sculptor.

Among the elegances, the pillars form the principal element in the composition. Study the exterior of the Mahi Shasura, for example. There is rich maturity manifested in the singularly graceful conception executed on the exterior. The heraldic motif here is important.

Perhaps one of the most interesting riddles of the sand is the seven pagodas, 'each a replica quarried out of whale-backed rock' for which Mammalapuram is justly renowned. Each one of these is in a remarkable state of preservation. They are monoliths known as 'rathas' in India. Here again emphasis is not laid on magnitude and size but on proportions. Save for Draupadi's ratha, the remaining ones have very modest proportions, the largest being 42 feet long, 35 ft. wide, 40 feet high. There are eight rathas in all, reminiscent of Buddhist type. The base is supported by figures of animals, the lion alternating with the elephant who becomes the bearer of heavy burdens. You will probably recall the chariot-shaped base of the famous Black Pagoda Temple at Konarak as a part of Orissan Architecture. Of the Vihara or monastery type, there are five in number, all square in plan and pyramidal in elevation. It would appear that they have been evolved out of buildings composed of cells. According to one authority, here we discern 'a metamorphosis from the Buddhist hostel to the Hindu shrine'. Where the Pallavas scored was in giving to posterity, the excellent quality of sculpture architecture adorning the mandapas and rathas. In a way, this would to some extent appear to be a continuation of the classical movement for plastic arts commencing with the Elephanta and the Karli Caves in Bombay State. The bas-reliefs here are however characterised by a remarkable restraint.

All things change. Styles and ideas in architecture as also in other things in life go through a change in mode. Which perhaps explains why much of the

provision of similar ones on a small scale in Mammala-puram.

Turning on to Madura, you come across the world-famous temple devoted to the 'fish-eyes' Goddess Meenakshi. Madura is situated on the main line of the Southern Railway on the Egmore-Trivandrum route and is besides famous as an industrial centre for cotton and silk weaving. The pride of place, however, goes to the temple and the stone hall of 1000 pillars. Strangely enough, in the south there are a number of places boasting of stone halls of 1000 pillars although according to strict arithmetical calculation, the number generally falls short as in the case of Madura where the exact number of pillars is 997. However, the discrepancy is hardly noticeable.

According to legend, Siva, known in the south as Sundareswar is supposed to have married the daughter of the local Pandya Chief under the name of Meenakshi or the 'fish-eyed' goddess. One of the most fascinating features of the great temple at Madura is the twin shape measuring about 847 ft. by 729 ft. surrounded by 9 gopurams which can be seen from any distance miles round Madura, the largest one being 152 ft. high. According to history, the most beautiful parts of the temple were built by Tirumala Nayak (1623-1660). This is one of the few temples in which one can literally get lost as there is a mass of columns and alleys each one leading to another and at night when the puja is in progress, the temple indeed affords one of the most beautiful and elevating sights imaginable. At the same time, there is considerable cultural and literary activity afoot and music performances are also held in the court-yards outside the main temple. There are small bazaars inside the temple premises, where considerable trade activity is carried on from day to day. The beauty of the temple is enhanced by the availability of a small tank known as the 'tank of the golden lilies' which again at night time provides the most beautiful appearance.

About $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the temple to the South East the palace of Tirumala Nayak conceived on Saracenic lines, now utilised for public and government offices.

CHAPTER IX

THE VALLEYS OF THE GODS KULU & KANGRA VALLEYS

PERHAPS some of the most picturesque valleys in India besides the vale of Kashmir are the twin Valleys of Kulu and Kangra in the Himalayas. Rightly have these beauty spots been termed as the 'Valleys of the Gods'. This is by no means difficult to understand for most of our places which are of a picturesque nature are perched on eerie heights, some of them nestle at the foot of mountains and they have been utilised for building some of the most beautiful temples in the world. The association of divinity with Kulu can, therefore, be easily understood.

The approach to this valley which was at one time quite an adventure is rendered much more easy by the improvement of communications. From Delhi to Pathankot is a short run both by train and by plane. Pathankot is the focal point of your journey both towards the Kulu and Kangra Valleys. First, let us take the Kangra Valley. Here the approach is partly by the narrow gauge Railway line run by the Northern Railway from Pathankot to Nagrota, a distance of 175 miles. Thereafter no Railway communication is available. The rest of the places have, therefore, necessarily to be covered by motor-transport. This is, however, available in plenty and is run along roads which leave very little to be desired. On the other hand, if you do not want to utilise the Rail transport, the entire run of the journey can be done from Pathankot by car. In fact, this is recommended as it gives you greater freedom to roam about the valleys and to halt whenever you feel like it en-route, whereas if you go by rail, it

will be difficult for you to break the journey at every point. There is less flexibility in rail travel.

The principal places in the Kangra Valley which you must see are Dalhousie and Dharamsala. Going further up in the Kulu valley there are a number of spots of a picturesque nature such as the Kulu Fort, then further north, Katrain and finally Manali upto which point you have excellent amenities available both en-route and at different places of halt. Thereafter, the journeys are in the nature of a small adventure although as you go up north, the altitude increases and with it the wild beauty of the Himalayan snows. A number of passes are reasonably accessible. The Parang Pass and the Kanizam Pass for example, which are at an altitude of 18,300 and 14931 ft. above sea level. However, these ascents become an adventure, if you are not used to high altitudes.

The main Kangra Valley is situated between the towns of Shahpur and Baijnath. It is interesting to note that while the height of the points over-looking the valley is often considerable, the valley itself is situated at a mean height of about 1,400 ft. above sea level which is nothing to worry about. The Kangra Fort itself is 2404 ft. high while Nagrota, a small town in the centre of the valley is barely 2891 ft. high. A number of tea gardens abound in Palampur which is over 4000 ft. high. The highest peak in this region is the Dhauladhar Snow Range surrounding the Kangra Valley which is 16,000 ft. high.

The valley is truly a place of delightful contrasts. Here you are likely to experience a variety of vegetation which it will be difficult to come across in other places in India. Because of the height of the surrounding mountains, there are green highlands and forests, tall and majestic pines and deodar trees which can flourish only in cold climate. The vegetation is often reminiscent of the Swiss Alps and the English Country side. While the area covered by the valley is decorated

rock-hewn architecture at Mammalapuram is in an unfinished state today. Political changes have affected art movements in more countries than one at various times in history. So at Mammalapuram. Historically speaking, 674 A.D. was a dividing line when the patronage of King Narasimha ceased. Under his successor, Rajasimha, began a new movement. The limitations of rock-hewn architecture became at once apparent. It imposed severe restrictions on the artists and artificers. Hence, began a craze for structural buildings which gave immense powers and infinite freedom to the workmen. Thus of the Rajasimha mode were born six examples of shore temples comprising the Shore and Isvara temples at Mammalapuram and the rest at Conjeevaram. Of these, the Panamalai shore shrine still exists intact, its twin towers still stand erect. Due to the selection of the site, the plan had necessarily to be unorthodox. According to ancient traditions, the rising sun had to greet the cella which faces east; hence, there is no room for a forecourt. This temple it is believed served as a beacon light, a counterpart of the modern lighthouse to seafarers coming from far and wide. There is not even the usual entrance gateway, hence a massive enclosure wall. Two additional temples were later on attached to it. A feature of the shore temples is the consciousness of Pallava architects of the importance of ground plans of elaborate water systems. There are a number of conduits and receptacles picturing the importance of water on a shore temple.

So we take leave of Mammalapuram and make our way back to Madras from where we came. Konarak, Mammalapuram, Somnath in different parts of India are examples of India's shore temples, they are thought-provoking and you would want to know the why and wherefor of these mysteries in the sand.

Situated about 22 miles from Chingleput is Conjeevaram (Kanchipuram) also known as Kanchi (the Golden City) supposed to be one of the seven sacred

places in India most renowned for its architecture. While there are no hotels at Conjeeveram, travellers' bungalows are available and arrangements can be made for food supplies etc. The town has a very ancient antiquity and according to legend in the 5th century B.C. Gautama is supposed to have converted the people of Conjeeveram and in the 3rd century B.C. Asoka is supposed to have built many Buddhist topes in the neighbourhood. Relics of these legends are, however, not available. The Pallavas who ruled this area in the 7th century were renowned for patronage of learning and architectural arts and Kanchi assumed importance in this era. It has been stated that in Kanchi almost every street has got a temple with the result that it will be difficult to enumerate all the temples at Kanchi. Principal mention may, however, be made of the Pallava Temples of Kailasanath and Vaikunta Perumal both of which are famous for their ancient architecture.

According to calculation there are 18 Vishnu and 108 Siva temples out of which the biggest are the Shri Kamakshi Varadaraja and Ekambaranadha temples. These imposing temples, according to historical evidence, were built by Krishna Devraya II, the ruler of the Vijayanagar Kingdom. Kamakshi (literally, 'loving-eyes') is dedicated to Parvati, the consort of Siva who is worshipped under different names, e.g. at Kasi (Benares) by the name of the 'Broad-eyes' and in Madura as the 'fish-eyes'. Also one of the most interesting of the group is the Pallava structure, Kailasanath Temple, which has a peculiar plan. The temple is situated in a large and small courtyard with a central group of shrines placed towards the extremity of the large one. One of the most interesting features of this temple is the dedication in sculpture of a number of sages who are obviously deeply absorbed in listening to the exhortations of Siva, who is seated under a banyan-tree. This is a unique feature of the temple. On the other hand the provision of rathas is reminiscent of the

with interesting foliage, the plains which have the advantage of being washed by any number of streams abound in a variety of rich crops ranging from rice to fruit trees.

Let us have a close look at two of the points in this valley. Let us see Kangra first and then Dharamsala. Kangra itself is a small town but one cannot help being overawed by the majesty of the surrounding snow-clad hills. Kangra lies at a distance of about 3 miles from a place called Gaggal. The valley of the Gods boasts of a number of temples, the most important one perhaps being that of Goddess Vajresri. At a distance of only 21 miles south-east of Kangra lies the famous temple of Jawala Mukhi nestling against a rocky cliff. A number of supernatural phenomena have come to be associated with this particular temple. Popular beliefs being what they are, such natural phenomena as the emanation of jets of combustible gas have come to be linked with the miraculous powers of the Goddess. Very big fairs are held in the vicinity in the months of April and October every year which draw thousands of pilgrims to this spot. It is interesting to note that while the Muslims invaded the valley time and again and while the terrible earth-quake of 1905 helped considerably to rock the valley and to destroy a number of edifices, the Hindu temples have somehow survived and continue to attract a number of visitors every year. No wonder then that popular belief comes to be strengthened in the powers of the divinity.

Dharamsala, on the other hand, has been known as an important Sanatorium because of its extremely equable climate almost throughout the year with the exception of winter when you have to migrate further down south. There are a number of health resorts for Tubercular patients and decent hotels and Rest Houses are available at Dharamsala, at reasonable rates.

The next two important points in our itinerary would be Mandi and Joginder Nagar. It would inte-

rest you to know that some of our biggest Hydro-Electric Projects are situated at Joginder Nagar which, therefore, hums continuously with considerable industrial activity. Advantage has been taken of nature and the waters of the Uhl River have been harnessed and energy is derived from this river which is situated at a height of 6,000 ft. above sea level. 'The haulage way ascending a height of over 8,000 ft. through miles of hard granite rock, the huge weirs on the Uhl river, the big reservoir containing 7 million cubic ft. of water, the 15,000 ft. long tunnel which brings water from the Uhl river to the Power House piercing the mountain range and the intricate system of power transmission are a great engineering achievement'. A visit to the electric works in a place so detached from the rest of civilization is a thrilling experience. From there on, we proceed to Mandi, another old town which, however, boasts of interesting rock carvings on its temples as also some of the most archaic charms of its old bazaars, and gardens. Here you can replenish your supplies before you proceed further into the Kulu Valley proper.

An interesting feature of the Kulu as also the Kangra Valley is the course of the river Beas which keeps you company at various points on your way. Beas is a torrential river in some parts and magnificent in others. It smiles at you, it glares at you; it is beneficent, it is wrathful. The upper portion of this river is perhaps one of the prettiest and richest parts of the valley. Some of the finest orchards of Kulu, Manali and Kangra are the fruits of the waters of this river. In fact, Beas and Kulu are almost synonymous and it will be impossible to dis-associate the one from the other.

From Mandi we proceed to Kulu. Kulu itself is better known as Sultanpur and is situated at a height of 4,000 ft. and boasts of a good Dak Bungalow. There is also a Forest Rest House which can be booked in advance, if so desired. At Raison there is the Aramgarh

which is a fully furnished Rest House and is known as the Shacks. At Katrain, there are two Civil Rest Houses known as the River View and Tysonia. At Manali which will possibly be the last point of your trip and which is situated at a height of 6,000 ft. above sea level, we have a Civil Rest House, a Forest Rest House as also an excellent Paying Guest Establishment run by the family of Banons. This particular establishment is situated in the midst of some of the finest orchards of the Kulu valley and the site is an inspiring one, particularly for the creative genius such as that of an artist, a writer and so on. Here you will be treated to some of the most luscious fruits in the World, such as pears and apples, in season. Manali exports delicious fruits to all parts of India and believe it or not, they arrive in excellent condition, wherever you are.

A word about the amenities which are available in the valleys. Practically at a distance of 8 to 10 miles you come across Dak Bungalows and Rest Houses throughout your progress in the Kangra and Kulu Valleys. Some of the Dak Bungalows are not usually reserved in advance—they can be occupied whenever they are available. Visitors are however well-advised to book the Rest Houses particularly during the summer months and then again in September, October and November when they are very much in demand. Reasonable amenities are available at the Dak Bungalows as also at the Rest Houses. It is, however, desirable to take some provisions such as canned foodstuffs with yourself if you want to be entirely independent of supplies from the neighbouring valleys and towns. On the other hand at fairly big places like Katrain, Dharamsala, Manali etc. local products such as milk, eggs, potatoes etc. are available at fairly easy rates. European stores and tinned foodstuffs can be had in plenty at places like Kangra, Dharamsala, Kulu; also to a lesser extent at Katrain and Manali.

What do we do in these two valleys? Of course

the scenic effects will hold you enthralled and you would like to do a lot of hiking and discover points of interest by yourself. That apart, for the lovers of sport, particularly fishing and hunting, there is nothing like the Kulu and Kangra Valleys. Excellent opportunities abound for these two sports and there is infinite variety in the types of fish available in the valley of the Beas. One famous kind is the trout which is there in abundance. For big and small game shooting, once again the valley boasts of such varied fare as the leopard, ibex, snow-leopard among big game, and any amount of snow-pheasant and snow-partridge so far as small game is concerned. The shooting, however, varies according to the season and it is best to have a detailed knowledge before one can indulge in it. Hiking, of course, is always a pleasant pastime for there are innumerable lofty peaks to conquer and virgin paths to tread in these valleys.

Manali which is the last stage in our journey affords the most pleasant holiday to any visitor—particularly the tired business-man or the harried man of affairs who wants an escape from active life. A little above Manali are the famous hot springs of Bashishat. The Parbati Valley, a tributary of Beas river, about 30 miles in length, affords another interesting trek as does a visit to the famous hot springs of Manikaran. The waters of these springs are supposed to have a lot of therapeutic value and bring relief to sufferers of diseases like rheumatism, arthritis etc.

The picturesqueness of the valleys is enhanced by the life which is being led by the people here. Nature is generally kind, the tempo of life is slow and the beauty of the place is unspoiled and untouched by the march of civilisation. Except for places like Joginder Nagar, industrialisation has not crept into these valleys with the result that life proceeds slowly in every respect.

The valley often throbs with emotion particularly

at the time of the Dasserah which is probably one of the most colourful festivals in Kulu. While the occasion provides an opportunity for all and sundry to buy and sell, stacks of goods which arrive in the valley from distant places like Ladakh and Yarkand, add to the colour of this place. On this occasion the deities in the temples are carried out of the temples in procession and are paraded and then worshipped by their followers, accompanied by dance and song. It is then that the somnolent valley shakes off its stupor and bursts forth into lusty life.

The Government of India have recently brought out an interesting little booklet on Kulu and Kangra which incidentally gives you a considerable amount of information of a detailed nature on the various aspects of these valleys. This could be supplemented by a direct approach to the Public Relations and District Public Relations Officers at Simla, Amritsar, Dharamsala and Kulu, in each one of which place they have got their offices. It is good to be informed of the aspects of life and amenities in this valley before proceeding further.

From Kulu and Kangra, your next hop should be the delectable vale of Kashmir, immortalised in the epic poem of Lallarukh. Poets and peasants, princes and paupers alike have sung of the glories of Kashmir. It is no use adding a host of superlatives. We do not have to 'advertise' Kashmir to the world abroad. Like Switzerland, it is there for all and sundry to admire and to adore. Like the Taj, its fame has preceded it and spread to various countries of the world, so that tourists from all the globe over throng to see it and add one more chapter of praise at its altar! The scenery, the snows, the lakes, the fauna and the flora are largely reminiscent of the Swiss Alps. Perhaps when you have seen both, you could make your notes of comparison and suggest points of difference.

Air travel has considerably simplified the access to

Srinagar. Before Partition, there was an alternate route to Srinagar via Rawalpindi and Murree which was a little more popular than the present route via Pathankot and/or Amritsar. According to the present arrangements, you leave Delhi in the evening by train and reach Pathankot next morning, leaving the same morning by bus and reaching Srinagar late in the evening. The visit to Amritsar is entirely voluntary. If you feel like it, you may spend a day there or you can race straight ahead. The plane flight is a thrill. Only it ends too soon, just when you are beginning to enjoy yourself. Perhaps the ideal arrangement would be to have the best of everything. For example, a train ride in one of the newly constructed air-conditioned coaches from Delhi to Pathankot, a taxi/bus ride in two stages from Pathankot to Srinagar, breaking journey at Banihal and spending the night in the beautifully-situated Rest house and returning from Srinagar to Pathankot/Delhi by air. However, that is a matter of personal choice and you should not be influenced. I might however tell you that the distance from Pathankot to Srinagar is 267 miles and the ride by road may be rather tedious unless you are taxi-ing and you are in good company. Even beauty can pall—after a time.

Where to stay in Srinagar?

The choice is almost unlimited. There are excellent hotels in European style which are available at fairly reasonable rates and can provide you with all the amenities. Nedous, recognised to be one of the best of the lot will charge you about Rs. 16 per diem and Rs. 30 for the two of you. The Golf view and Park Hotels are also quite suitable and little more moderately priced. The rates quoted however are approximate; there are fluctuations, the rates applicable off-season being slightly lower. It is always best to ascertain in advance and to be precise about the financial implications of every journey. By the way, the Oberois have added a new hotel at Srinagar very recently.

A more romantic idea is to take a House Boat on hire say, for a period of one month in the first instance and to radiate from this watery home to different parts of Kashmir and keep coming back to it as and when you desire. You will find the rates surprisingly low for the accommodation and services offered. Charges vary of course according to the size of the boat and the furnishings. About Rs. 300 per month for a house-boat is considered quite good. This home on water is usually a three bed-room affair; about 70 to 90 feet long and 10 to 15 feet wide, is well furnished and well-equipped with three or four servants who will be in constant attendance. Mooring charges are extra but then you can go about quite freely and choose your own place of halt, for as long as you like. Alternatively, you can stay in a Hotel and go about by boats called Shikaras in Srinagar. The crisp Kashmiri air, the unsophisticated belles around you, the moon above and the snows around you can sometimes make the head reel. So, look out! More poems have been composed, more pictures painted, more plots (fiction only!) conceived in the heady air of Kashmir than anywhere else in India.

If you are planning a longer stay, you might as well rent a Bungalow for the season and run your own establishment. If you are a little more unconventional and want things your own way, how about camp life for a change? You will find all the accessories easily available and the Government extremely helpful in the matter of obtaining camp equipment, ration cards, petrol coupons, etc. You will not take long to get established. No irksome formalities here!

A word about your clothing. In other parts of India, it does not matter; in Kashmir, it does! Srinagar itself can be rather warm during summer, particularly in the day time, say between May and July, when the temperature will vary from 70 to 80°. Remember Srinagar is only 5000 ft. above sea level and it is neatly sandwiched between surrounding hills. But then the

night temperatures are rather low and if you move out of Kashmir and go up to Pahalgam or Gulmarg, as you should at the earliest opportunity, temperatures will be appreciably lower. So, a good supply of warm clothings is essential. Most of the good hotels like Nedous and Golf View are well-equipped in regard to supply of beddings, etc. Still it will be desirable to make certain and have some of your own supplies, particularly of a warm nature with yourself!

The places in and around Srinagar are legion and you are particularly bound to be entranced by the numerous gardens which will greet you in full bloom. The Moghuls were particularly crazy about gardens and they have left an indelible mark of their tastes on Srinagar. Despite geographical difficulties of the 16th Century India, Jahangir often retired to Kashmir along with his retinue, with his beloved queen Nur Jahan. The Shalimar Gardens are a relic of Moghul times. Centuries have gone by but they have retained their ancient glory. The gardens are arranged on terraces which is a common feature of hill gardens. The pavilion of black marble with the fountains playing all round it gives it a romantic touch. Their beauty is indeed well-known.

Among the other gardens worthy of a visit are the Nishat Bagh (pleasure garden) and Chasme Shahi (royal spring) which are at a distance of $7\frac{1}{2}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles respectively from Srinagar. The former in particular is situated in such a way as to command a wonderful view of the Dal Lake. The terraces are a distinguishing feature, here also. You can reach the gardens by boat also—in fact, it is slightly nearer that way. Chashme Shahi, conceived and executed by Shah Jahan is like a petite danseuse, with so much charm packed within a small space. A good motorable road takes you to all the spots within a short time so that these not-so-distant places become ideal picnic spots for a day's outing, if you so desire it. Throughout Kashmir, the

weather conditions leave very little to be desired so that you would love to be out in the open as much as possible.

Among the principal places you might visit during your stay in Srinagar are the Museum on the banks of the Jhelum which houses some of the most exquisite specimens of Kashmiri art, the Shankaracharya Temple which will interest the antiquarian and the archaeologist in you, for historical evidence has it that it was built as far back as 400 B.C., the Peri Mahal, literally, the abode of the fairies, now in ruins but once a kind of academy of astrology built by the Moghuls, the Pathar and Jama Masjid, two of the most well known mosques in Kashmir, the first one attributed to Nur Jahan, the second built in the year 1404. Other items of religious interest are Shah Hamadan, a rectangular mosque which boasts of beautiful carvings on its exteriors and Hazrat Bal, a Moslem shrine in which is housed the famous hair of the Holy Prophet.

Any description of Kashmir would be incomplete without a reference to its environs. In fact, many people have insufficient regard for Srinagar itself and they move on quickly to see the innumerable surrounding beauty spots and health resorts for which Kashmir is world-famous. Only 29 miles away from Srinagar is Gulmarg, a vast meadow, situated 8700 ft. above sea level. The temperature on account of sheer altitude is very much lower here and while Srinagar itself can be warm in summer, people repair to cool Gulmarg which is most attractive to tourists in June. It wears a mantle of snow for more than half the year round. There are good hotels at Gulmarg, the principal ones being Nedous, an offshoot of the establishment at Srinagar, the Golf View and Green Land Hotel. The rate for Nedous is Rs. 16 to 18 per head, the other two being Rs. 12 per head per diem. Regular buses ply between Srinagar and Gulmarg. It is plain sailing for the first twenty-five miles, whereafter the remaining and the last four



A South Indian Temple



MADURA
SRINAGAR



miles mean negotiating a path-way through pine groves, itself a fascinating piece of scenery. Golf and hiking are the chief attractions of the place.

A further 4-mile hop from Gulmarg is Khilanbarg, reputed to be the botanists' paradise for the kaleidoscopic variety of fauna and flora provided by nature. The climb is stiff for Khilanbarg is situated 10,000 ft. above sea level. However, ponies are readily available, a riding pony costing about Rs. 1/4 from Gulmarg to Khilanbarg, and a pack pony costing a rupee. Rates are fixed for the labourers accompanying you and are not at all unreasonable.

Return to Srinagar and then take a trip to Pahalgam which is 60 miles from Srinagar in the north-easterly direction, as Gulmarg is on the north-westerly side. Perched at an altitude of 7000 ft. above sea level, Pahalgam, unspoilt by man, relatively more unsophisticated and unaffected by urbanity has retained a charm of its own and is consequently more popular with the class of people who prefer virgin charm to artificial life. If you are an enthusiast, you could hop to Ambernath, a place of Hindu pilgrimage but as this is an arduous bit of adventure, it is not recommended. At Pahalgam, the principal Hotel is Plaza, the rates being ten to twelve rupees per head. Buses leave according to a regular schedule every morning at 7-30 from Srinagar and the cost per seat is only five rupees.

Among other places of interest around Srinagar, special mention may be made of Kokarnag, at a distance of 50 miles from Srinagar, the place boasting of curative waters, good fishing and an excellent camping ground; Achhabal, 40 miles from Srinagar, has a beautiful garden, a Government trout hatchery, Lake Wular, which I think is the largest fresh water lake in India, accessible both by road and river. The Jhelum dashes in and out of it. The lake abounds in priceless fish of all kinds.

Like the Kulu and the Kangra valleys, the main attractions of the Kashmir valley are shooting, fishing,

and trekking. Big game is available in plenty. You should however remember to have your licence for arms and ammunitions available for a check at the customs post. The black and red bear, the snow leopard, the antelope etc. will provide you lots of shooting thrills. The principal items in the repertoire of angling will be the trout and the mahseer, both of which are available in abundance in almost all the lakes in Kashmir. A Fishing Licence should be had in advance. The fees are Rs. 20 per season for the mahseer and Rs. 30 for the trout. Any tourist agencies will supply the fishing tackle required. As a tip, remember to consult the Pisciculturist, Jammu and Kashmir Government at Srinagar and he will give you invaluable information about fish in the State.

Then of course come trekking and mountaineering. Both are exciting experiences, particularly from Pahalgam and Gulmarg. A few tips for trekkers are necessary. An adequate supply of warm clothing is essential. For mountaineering, nailed boots are a "must" so also are deeply tinted blue glasses. Protect your bedding and look out for mosquitoes and be careful about camp outfit. Better to have more than less, particularly when you are out in the blues. Above all, have a small medicine chest, particularly if you are having a camp life. It is best to be ready for emergencies. A friend of mine got bitten by a scorpion once!

I must say travel facilities in Kashmir are innumerable and everyone will be quite willing to help you out. The Government take considerable pains to make your stay as comfortable as possible. Where formalities are concerned, the irksome part has been minimised. A few things may be remembered. An entry permit is compulsory before you cross the border. This can be issued in advance by the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, in Delhi; alternatively, the matter can be entrusted to the tourist agents who will arrange to get it for you. Petrol is rationed in Kashmir but cou-

pons will be readily given to you by the Kashmir Trade Commissioner (5, Prithviraj Road, New Delhi). The Customs permit all personal items of use like wearing apparel, toilet goods, typewriter, radio etc.; for the rest you are liable to pay duty. There is still rationing in the state, if you are not staying in a hotel but, then the Director, Visitors Bureau, will be very prompt about the issue of a ration card! And when buying art goods or engaging servants, look out for Government run institutions like the Kashmir Arts Emporium in the case of the former and the registration tickets issued by the Director, Visitors' Bureau, in the case of the latter. You are then not likely to be overcharged nor would your servant be a fake. Remember, the Kashmiri thrives on the visitor and there is always the temptation to knock out a little more money from you. That is human nature. The Government agencies do their very best to prevent it. At the same time, once in Kashmir, it will be difficult for you to turn back without collecting a few mementoes. Kashmir abounds in innumerable charming items of handicraft which you are likely to be tempted to acquire. So, it is best to know in advance!

CHAPTER X

DANCING IN INDIA

LIKE many other things, classical dancing in India had its origin in religion. Consider the position of our Devadasis, literally, the maiden-slaves of the Gods, the counterpart of the Western vestal virgins, who dedicated their lives to the Gods and sang and danced before them on every festive and religious occasion. Such institutions have often degenerated in the past and the traditions in South Indian temples also suffered a similar set-back. But at one time, whether as the result of innate genius of the people or as the outcome of patronage willingly bestowed by the Chola Rulers, Tanjore in the south came to be synonymous with art and culture of a very high order. For Bharat Natyam, the art form practised down south is highly intricate, stylised, sometimes statuesque but always vibrant with emotion and passion.

The origin of dancing is shrouded in legends. According to one story, Vishnu conquered the twin demons, Madhu and Kaitabha and danced in joy to celebrate the victory. The art of the dance, however, could not just be allowed to perish like that. So Vishnu disclosed it to Brahma who in turn passed on the knowledge to Siva who as Nateswara is known as the past master of the art. The belief still holds good that somewhere in the snowy abode of the Gods, in the mythical Kailas, in the caves of the Himalayas, Siva holds his celestial court every evening and dances the Sandhya Tandava with his consort Parvati, also known as the pale Uma, dancing as in a dream by his side! Take it for what it is worth!

The art and science of the dance have been handed

down to us by Bharata in his *Natya Shastra*. Certain features of Indian dancing are unique and may well be enumerated at this stage. The enchantment of the bodily gesture consists of a combination of (i) limbs, (ii) the whole body, (iii) the entire face. The language of the dance is called *Mudras* or hand poses and everything is conveyed by the grammar of the hands and all emotions are translated through the facial expressions. The *Bhava* or the mood plays a prominent role in any dance form and the rhythm (the *tāla*) is all important for each step of the dance must synchronise with the orchestration provided, with particular reference to the *tabla* or the *mridangam*, the counterpart of the drum which has a distinct personality in the language of music in India. Finally—and at a more advanced stage—comes the *Rasa*, the flavour, the inner spirit of the dance, when the performer goes into the very soul of inner life and achieves communion with God.

“The dancing foot, the sound of the tinkling bells,

The songs that are sung and the varying steps....
Find out these within yourself, then shall your
fetters fall away”.

This quest within is the spiritualisation of all dance forms in the ultimate instance and is what raises a terrestrial pastime to celestial heights. And yet the *vidya*, the knowledge of the dance, according to Indian custom, can only be imbibed through the good offices of a competent guru (a spiritual teacher) who initiates the disciple into the rigorous technique, step by step, preferably since early childhood. The mastery of all creative arts is a kind of *sadhana*, a severe discipline and sacrifices have to be made at its altar. No wonder then that they catch 'em young for the purpose. The disciple lives with the guru for a number of years before the latter can issue a certificate of competency!

According to the ancient legends, there are sup-

posed to be 180 styles of dancing in India. On the panels of the temples at Chidambaram in the South, 97 of them have been carved in stone. There are however a few principal dance forms practiced throughout India today, and each one of it has a number of ramifications. This is however strictly according to classical computation. Besides, there are innumerable folk dances in every part of India which have a remarkable beauty and vigour of their own. We will have a glance at each one of them.

The first and foremost of these is the Bharat Natyam practised throughout the South of India. In my opinion, this is the most intricate as also the most esoteric of the dance forms practised in India. It is live in practice: also it has the age old traditions behind it which are being retained assiduously and at the same time being trimmed to suit modern times. The dresses alone will convince you of what I mean. They are extremely modern so far as the ensemble is concerned and they are designed to give the maximum of freedom to the danseuse in the execution of her footwork in particular. Exotic draperies—the fan-like inverted-bell type skirt in particular—and bewitching jewellery are added on to accentuate the charm and enhance the beauty of the dancer.

Highly poetical in expression, the origin of this dance lies in the Saivite cult. The devotional aspect of this dance is apparent. Nothing is here left to the imagination, for the musical instruments provide the entire orchestration which is generally on a grand scale. The mridang, the flute, the cymbals, the clarionet all come into play. The lyrics (padams) are sung while the dance progresses. The dancer has to execute a number of things simultaneously. The expression must conform strictly to the content of the song, each emotion, each sentiment, being translated by the language of the hands, the feet, the facial expressions. At the same time, the feet have to keep time with the bols

(the words) of the tabla (in this case, the mridangam). The soul of every Indian orchestra, whether for classical music or dance, is the tabla. A wrong beat can jar—and mar—the entire performance! Hence, the severity of discipline and the need for vigorous practice, day in and day out. The songs which accompany the dance are called “padams”. The Varnam is a typical Bharat Natyam dance, a kind of invocation to spring, embodied in which are Natya, the dance; Nrittya, the dramatic expression; Abhinaya, the expression of gestures, the Lasya in the Tillana which is the essence of feminine grace and charm. The piece de resistance of every Bharat Natyam performance is the Tillana and every budding performer aspires to do full justice to it. It has an elaborate technique behind it and is the fruit of hours of arduous labour.

The next dance form which is widely known in India is called Kathakali and is practised in Malabar on the West coast of India. Already we have told you something about the life and atmosphere of Malabar. Malabar is the home of the Kathakali and the Kathakali expresses its soul. First, the background. In the evening, the drum beats announce the performance which will take place at night. The housewives hasten with the domestic chores and everyone is then free to enjoy himself. The dance is held in the open air. Beautiful oil lamps are lit on the occasion. And when the balmy breezes blow from the palm-fringed shore, the performance begins. You are soon lulled into the trance of the dance.

The episodes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the ancient Hindu epics, are a perennial spring of inspiration and form favourite items in the players' repertoire. A number of folk tales are told and re-told in classical tradition. The costumes are gorgeous, if trifle imposing and sometimes too loud. Consider that the entire dance drama is staged in front of you without a single syllable being uttered. The mudras play an

all important role and facial masks notwithstanding, the gesture language has to keep up the interest of the audience for long hours. Remember: most of these shows go on far into the night; the Malabari is not much bothered about time. Time stands still in Malabar, the clock ticks very slowly. Sometimes you break up the performance only after heralding the dawn. Hence, action plays a large part and prevents interest from flagging.

If Bharat Natyam is feminine in content—and is divided into the category of Lasya—Kathakali is essentially masculine and vigorous. Great battles are staged, epic emotions are displayed and there is something Homeric about the atmosphere, which is surcharged with great expectations, for lofty moral issues, the age old problems of right and wrong are often at stake and the stage is the playground on which solutions are reached. This dance technique is known as Tandava. The sway of the entire body comes into play. Here again, we have had considerable revivalism particularly with the rejuvenation and impetus given to it by such poets as Vallathol. It must be admitted that there are a number of crudities in the old Kathakali. If we could remove them and make the art a little more refined, the inner genius will not suffer. On the other hand, we will have more polish and grace without sacrificing its vigour. The movement is afoot and will doubtless succeed in the new India.

Then comes the Manipuri school of dancing. The name is derived from Manipur, a state on the Easternmost confines of India. The dance is languorous, dolorous, lyrical in content, with sinuous, snaky movements which sometimes border on dullness since there are no refreshing contrasts to be offered. The music is Bengali Kirtan, of a devotional nature, which blends admirably with the lazy steps. There is nothing vigorous or febrile about this dance. The tempo is consequently slow. What is lost in vigour is however gained

in the resulting exquisite grace, for the female form of the Manipuri can be bewitching in its seductive curves and its colourful costumes. There is something ethereal about the whole thing. It is so soft, so much gossamer-like that it baffles analysis. The best one can do is to give oneself up to it—unconditional surrender is called for—and sit back to enjoy it. Only then can full justice be done.

The dance is strictly Vaishnavite in content. Favourite episodes enacted are those from the lives of Krishna and Radha. The inner feeling or *Bhava* plays a major role in every performance. The dance usually takes place at night—often at midnight—in the *Natya Mandir*, often an improvised dance hall hastily put up in a barn or a field. The mood is often reminiscent of Krishna when one night in the deep calm of the moon-dipped Brindavan, he did the dance of the *Maha Ras*, out of sheer joy at the sublime beauty of the universe! There is often pure rapture in this dance form, an ecstasy which it is given to few mortals to realise!

The genius of Indian dancing does not end with what has been said so far. For the above is the classical interpretation of dance. It has technique behind it, it has a form, a stylised system as also the tradition of ages behind it. To that extent, it is a rigid form. Its performance is once again confined mostly to the Indian cities. The true spirit of the dance is available in the Indian village. Here there is infinite variety but the underlying motif is one of joy, for the dance is a mode of self-expression. Certain seasons are particularly conducive to it. The freshness of the spring, the first flush of the monsoon, the harvest season in autumn, for example. Whether out of sheer joy at the beauty of nature or as the result of gratitude for Gods' bounties freely given and gratefully accepted, men and women spontaneously join hands in rapturous self-expression. The Santhal dances of Orissa or the Kangra War dances of the dogras are of this genre. In Gujerat and Kathia-

war, when the monsoon is over and the October moon is clear in a dust-free sky, men and women dance the 'garba' for the whole night for the sheer fun of it. For an unmarried girl, it is compulsory to keep awake—one way of doing so is by dance! Then there are dances connected with festivities such as the Holi dance or the dances during the Dassera and Diwali celebrations. The main point about the folk dancing is that it is simpler in technique, easier to follow, less complicated so that it quickly becomes a community affair and gains in tempo as masses of men and women join up! The dances of the Bhils, the Todas, the Santhals and the Gonds assume frenzied proportions and are vigorous manifestations of tribal genius at its very best. The improvement in the classical technique and tradition does not affect what is truly of the soil and inherently Indian!

CHAPTER XI

WITH GUN AND RIFLE IN INDIA

SINCE ages, India has been considered as a paradise for Shikar. Big game has a strange fascination for people. In fact, one of the principal attractions of the British Officers in India was the possibility of bagging game of a type which was never available at home. Consequently, jobs connected with the Civil Service, the Police and the Forest Department were extremely popular. They are so even today. While the British have gone, the traditions of Shikar have not died down.

On the other hand in the old days the princes in the various States took notable interest in Shikar. Shooting parties were organised on a colossal scale and even today Hollywood does not forget this grandeur of the past. While a lot of money was wasted on this account, considerable excitement took place and a kind of Tamasha was staged before the public whenever any important visiting official arrived on the spot. Nothing was left out and all possible luxuries were provided to the visitor, in fact the jungle scene was transformed entirely and wore a fairyland appearance. These are, however, impressions of a past which it will be difficult to recapture today.

Even so, the possibilities of Shikar remain very much so in India today. Game which originally could be shot without any let or hindrance today generally remains strictly controlled in the hands of the States. Necessary permission has to be obtained in advance before you indulge in shooting. Prescribed fees are also leviable in different States so far as licences are concerned. And when you land in India, a declaration has to be made by you at the Customs and as far as fire arms

are concerned, there is a high ad valorem duty which is levied if the arms you are carrying have not been in India before. The duty as also the licence fee have to be paid in advance.

There are States in which shooting can be arranged at almost any time. The best method of doing this is to get in touch with the local officials who are generally extremely helpful in making the necessary arrangements. The general method followed is to get the 'khabar' or news from the Village headman about the availability of say a tiger, if you are interested in shooting this particular animal—this is one of the most interesting sports in India today since the tiger is available in several parts of India—and thereafter select a good camping ground nearest to the village. In selecting the site, the proximity of provisions and water should be thought of. You should carry your own equipment as far as possible. Tents may be taken to be on the safe side; otherwise, the local authorities can be depended upon to give a hand. You should be careful about items such as milk, vegetables, etc., and it is better to boil the water before use.

The best method of shooting a tiger is from a machhan—a raised structure built of bamboos situated preferably at a point near a flowing stream of water where the tiger generally comes to quench its thirst. Bait has to be provided in the shape of a goat and tied around a tree adjacent to the machhan. Generally the tiger appears on the spot and attacks the bait. Thereafter, he comes where the water is provided. Any of the two occasions should be taken for doing the actual kill.

The interesting point about Shikar is that most of the places are situated very near the Railway line and India's extensive net work of railways and an efficient system of motor transport have brought all the shooting grounds within fairly easy reach of prospective sportsmen. Since reasonable quantity of game and excite-

ment can be available, it is no use going very much either into the interior and the jungles of India or on the Himalayan range for game. If you are interested, however, in a particular type of game such as the snow leopard or the wild ibex, then of course you will have to wander in the higher mountain ranges of the Himalayas.

The cat tribe is particularly fascinating to the sportsmen for the purpose of Shikar and of this variety, the tiger, the panther and the cheetah are most prominent. The lion is now scarce in India and is available practically only in Saurashtra in the Gir Forest. This region is, however, strictly protected and permission is very rarely given to the prospective sportsmen for shooting the lion. This is a dying breed and if shooting is allowed, the animal is not likely to survive and will in fact be extinct very shortly. In the past, the old Junagadh State of Saurashtra used to be a famous sporting ground because of the proximity of the Gir forest. Things have changed and the same possibilities are no longer available. Among other game we find, the bear, the deer, the antelope and the gazelle to say nothing of the elephant, the rhinoceros and wild buffalo. There are also curiosities such as the musk deer, clouded leopard and the Sikkim stag, some of which can be available with a certain amount of effort. The wild goat and the markhor goat are other varieties of wild game which is, however, not readily accessible.

Which is the best season for Shikar in India? In my opinion, winter is the ideal time in India. In the summer, conditions are difficult and the hot weather is by no means a pleasing time for outdoor game. Monsoon brings its own problems and if you are in an area where the rain fall is heavy, you are not likely to enjoy the sport. Consequently, winter and early spring are recommended for this purpose.

Perhaps from the point of the individual States, Kashmir is one of the places where Shikar is available

both in abundance and at all times of the year. Both big game and small game are readily available. The Office of the Game Garden, Srinagar, issues the necessary licences for shooting on application. Among the big game, you get the red bear, black bear, snow lynx, snow leopard, etc. and among birds you find the small chikor, ducks of various kinds, fowl and snipes. Visitors are allowed to take their own arms and ammunitions to Kashmir. They should, however, be protected by the necessary licences obtained from the Government of India.

Kashmir is also equally noted for fishing and the various lakes in and around Srinagar provide different types of fishing, the most important ones being of course, the mahseer and the trout. Here again licence fees are fixed ranging from Rs. 10/- to Rs. 20/- per season, the rate for trout being the highest viz. Rs. 30/- per week. Tents and fishing requisites can be obtained from any of the tourist agencies at reasonable rates.

As stated in the chapter on the "Valleys of the Gods", the Kulu and Kangra afford innumerable opportunities for both big and small game shooting. In Kangra the principal varieties for shooting of the big game are the black bear, the snow leopard, the ibex and the barking bear. Among the small game come several types of partridge, wild duck, etc. In the shooting season which technically commences from the 15th September, hill partridges, chikor, wood-cock and snow pigeon are found in abundance. Similarly so far as fishing is concerned, the Kangra valley is rich in such varieties as singao, karl, pallu, salo etc. while for the Kulu the trout is the main attraction.

Among the hills, Ooty on the one hand and Nainital on the other afford interesting game at almost all times of the year. Ooty particularly in the Nilgiris used to be a famous place at one time and the stories of tigers and panthers shot by the Burra Sahibs are often retold over tumblerfuls of lemon squash! Tigers and panthers

are still available even today and among other game, you get the sambhur, the pig and the jungle sheep on the Downs. If you are less enthusiastic or alternatively, you do not want to take further risks, jungle fowl, woodcock, snipe etc. are always there for you particularly during the winter. Here again, please note that the game is preserved under the rules of the Nilgiri Game Association and licences have to be obtained for the purpose. In Ooty as in several other hills, fishing plays an important part and the rainbow trout is a speciality of Pykara and is available in abundance. The other fish you get is the carp, the tench, the roach and the mahseer in the Bhavani River. The licence fees are defined and they range from Rs. 7/- per day to Rs. 100/- for the season. The latest figures in this connection may, however, be verified.

In Nainital on the other hand, the interest centres around the Nainital Club and the Yacht Club. An approach to the Divisional Forest Officer, Nainital, would be very helpful both in the matter of obtaining the necessary permits and getting local knowledge so far as shooting is concerned. Nainital is surrounded by a number of Government Forests and shooting is most fascinating. If you go further north, places like Bhimtal and Sat Tal afford you both the wilderness of the jungles and the opportunities for indulging in big game shooting. In Nainital, you will often be told tales about Jim Corbett and given authentic accounts of the background of his book.

Another part of India which affords good game is Assam where the roguish elephant and the wild buffalo are known to play havoc among the villagers and among the crops produced by them. An animal which is otherwise rare in the rest of India is the rhinoceros which is sometimes met with in the areas adjoining the Assam-Nepal Tarai. This a dying breed and is, therefore, protected fully as otherwise extinction would be certain. Bison is another big animal which is found in

Perhaps Madhya Pradesh (the old Central Provinces) is even today one of the most important regions for Shikar. At one time, big shooting parties used to be organised in various directions from this province. The prize animal here is the tiger and this inhabits the jungles of various parts of M. P. Swamp deer and bisons are other animals which are to be found extensively in this State. The beauty of Madhya Pradesh today is that there are any number of places—and it would be impossible to enumerate them in this chapter—from which Shikar parties can be arranged with very little difficulty.

The Bombay State used to boast at one time game of various types. Today, however, the position is different and all the forests have been practically denuded of big game. However, in the Southern region of the State particularly around Belgaum circle, there are still forests which contain the elephant, the tiger, the bison, the panther, etc. in abundance. The Divisional Forest Officer, Belgaum, should be contacted in this connection.

CHAPTER XII

MEMENTOES OF INDIA—WHAT TO GET—AND WHERE

THE problem of what to take from India by way of souvenirs when you go back is likely to haunt you from the very beginning. If you are unattached, you are fairly safe. If the wife is anywhere around you, the problem is likely to be difficult as the things which will tempt madame will be numerous and the choice among a number of things which are very good is often the most trying. If you are an artist or a collector yourself, you will need all my sympathies. Luckily for you, things are organised these days and you are not likely to be done out at any street corner. There are Government emporiums, arts and handicrafts centres, cottage industries, etc., in almost all state capitals which are controlled by the State Government and the irksome evil of bargaining is now conspicuous by its absence.

The point is that wherever you go, you are likely to be shown things which are typically Indian. Remember: there is no lack of leisure in the villages. The arts and crafts are well-known and even today are handed down from sire to son. Every village has its own handicrafts and they find their way to the small towns and then in turn to the big ones. Some of these crafts have had to face severe competition at the hands of manufactured items of industry which are much cheaper and therefore much more popular. The present economic situation prevents people from indulging in relative luxuries merely because the items of manufacture are cottage industries and handicrafts. Hence, several interesting but small scale crafts have died out altogether which is a very great pity indeed!

On the other hand, the fame of Indian handicrafts is historical. The fabrics of Murshidabad have been known since ages. In the days of Megasthenes, Indian nobility wore flowered muslins of fine weave and robes were embroidered in pure gold. The brocades of Banaras and Murshidabad, the jewellery of Jaipur, the ivories of Mysore, the glazed pottery of Khurja, the glass-work of Firozabad, the inlaid metal ware of Moradabad and Hyderabad, the papier-mache of Kashmir, have seen their fame spread across the length and breadth of India, now beyond the seas, so that when any visitors come to us from distant lands, they instinctively ask us for these and several other items. Wherever you go, you are likely to be given soap stone models of the places of your visit; thus mementoes will at once be handed over to you at very cheap rates of miniatures of the Taj at Agra, of the Jagannath Temple at Puri, etc.

Talking of antiquity, what is being said is not in any spirit of pride but for the sake of historical facts. According to data now available, from the evidence of the excavations at Mohen-jo-daro, it is obvious that our Indian potters must have been craftsmen of a very high order as far back as 5000 BC when most of the countries which constitute Western civilization today had not yet seen the dawn yet. Our Vedas mention items of gold and jewels in common use. If you have been to Ajanta, I am sure you did not fail to notice the details of apparel of exquisite cottons and silks brought out in the frescoes. These were by no means the figments of artistic imagination. In the civilization of the Indus Valley, carvings in ivory were practised assiduously. As Birdwood mentioned as far back as 1850: "In India, everything is hand wrought and everything, down to the cheapest tools or earthen vessel, is therefore more or less a work of art." And there was considerable individuality and ingenuity in such objects of art. For did not the artists often have the patronage of either the local prince or the village

landlord? And since his market was assured, he often worked relentlessly and entirely oblivious of the insidious effects of 'supply and demand'.

Among the important things enumerated in this chapter which you could carry by way of souvenirs, importance has necessarily to be given to materials which could be transported easily. In consequence, objects which are bulky have been omitted from the purview of this chapter. The thing which, perhaps, has attracted the tourist most in India has been its textiles which have drawn the interest of the westerners from very ancient times. The word 'kinkhab' describes the work done in pure silk with gold wire in addition. Places like Banaras, Murshidabad in the north and Ahmedabad, Aurangabad and Surat, etc. are famous for this kind of work. In Delhi itself, the Chandni Chowk contains some of the finest instances of delightful and typically Indian draperies. Equally delightful garments are produced in the Ganjam District on the East Coast of India. According to historical tradition, however, places like Dacca, Masulipatam and Paithan have been known for excellent muslins. The gossamer like stuff variously described with such poetic denominations as the Ab-i-Rawan (running water), Bakt-hawa (woven air) and Shab-nam (evening dew) are some of the titles given to the textures and convey some idea of the delicacy of the garments.

In addition, the women of India have, in different provinces, specialised both in the art of embroidery and in the art of dyeing garments. The love of colour shown by the Indian women is classic. Hissar, Rohtak and Gurgaon in the Punjab and a number of villages in Kathiawar and East Bengal have specialised in the art of embroidery. As regards the art of dyeing, this handicraft is prominent in the Deccan on the one hand and in Rajaputana on the other. Rajasthan specialises in saffron colours at their very best.

The delicacy of the textures of the fabrics could

be gauged from the fact that the workmanship had to be so refined that a shawl could be made to pass through a signet ring. The softness of the texture can readily be imagined from this description.

Among the souvenirs which you may perhaps like to take from India special mention may be made of two items in particular: (1) articles made of Papier Mache and (2) Ivory statuettes. The former is a speciality of Kashmir and the Kashmiri craftsmen who originally made these articles from pounded waste paper mixed with starch could produce such delightful and handy articles as powder boxes, trays, vases, lamp shades, etc., both in attractive colours and beautiful designs. At the present moment, in order to improve the process of manufacture wood pulp is used instead of paper. These are articles which could be carried very easily and at the same time are distinctive of the culture of India. On the other hand places like Mysore and Travancore in particular and to a lesser degree Murshidabad and Cuttack boast of striking and picturesque statuettes in ivory and ivory products like combs, caskets, cigarette boxes, toys, etc. These are also excellent items which could be carried by you as souvenirs. I understand that the Golden Temple at Amritsar also houses some excellent work in inlaid ivory. Carved images of mythological interest are produced in ivory.

The other item of interest is wood carving with designs of ornamentation and execution of a high order. Here again, it will be difficult to beat the production of the Kashmiri artist. The Kashmiri is an expert at walnut wood-work and portable items of furniture such as screens, tables, cabinets, picture frames have often adorned most of the Indian drawing rooms in all parts of India and may well stay in your drawing room. A visit to Kashmir would, therefore, be incomplete unless you brought back at least some of the mementoes of wood work from this valley.

Mention may also be made of another interesting

and fascinating piece of work which is made of sandalwood. Here the pride of place would necessarily go to Mysore with Surat, Ahmedabad etc. following in quick succession. A number of articles from sandalwood depict mythological sculptures, temples etc. and things like folding screens, picture frames, glove boxes, book covers, etc. can be easily and readily made available for you to carry.

Special mention may also be made of work which is unique and which is principally found in Bidar which you have probably seen in Hyderabad State—the work on Bidri—and described as a kind of damascene work in which one metal surface is inlaid with another. “A solution of copper sulphate is applied to the surface of the vessel which turns black. The design is etched on the black surface with a steel point. Then with hammer and chisel the pattern is scooped and made smooth and very thin pieces of gold or silver plate or gold or silver wire inlaid in the grooves. It is finally polished and the lustre of the inlay stands out against the black surface.”

Some of the most fascinating articles which are produced by the Bidri workers are book-ends, menu card holders, tea pots, cigarette cases, ash trays, etc. In Hyderabad and Secunderabad, there are a number of shops where these articles are easily available and your first impulse will be to take some of them as interesting examples of Indian handicrafts.

It is a pity that Indian handicrafts are suffering from a certain amount of depression at the present moment at the hands of machine-made products. However, the Government of India have taken an extremely keen interest in the matter and they are determined to ensure that industrialisation does not wipe out the cottage industries and that a certain amount of encouragement is afforded to this industry although on a small scale. The articles produced by Indian craftsmen have, even today, a great fascination which cannot be easily equalled anywhere else on earth.

CHAPTER XIII

TODAY AND TOMORROW

NOW that we have covered a number of facets of this sub-continent, it is necessary to pause and take stock of the India of today and to assess what it will look like tomorrow or in another ten years to come. It will be a truism to say that we have made, within the very short span of eight years (1947-'55) from the time this country achieved independence, very rapid strides in developing the country's agricultural resources, food products, industry etc. Have a glance in any direction you like and you will find growing signs of the colossus stirring itself to activity after a long period of slumber. The cumulative effects of the rising tempo of life have transformed the face of this ancient land. India wears a new garb now.

You, the discerning tourist, who have seen many a monument testifying to the greatness of this ancient land may well remark: "The past, yes, but what have you to show me for the future?" It is with a view to reassuring you on this subject that these few words are being written. Even if you have to delve into territory not easily accessible by the known modes of transport, we would urge you to see some of the landmarks which have sprung up, almost over night, almost with a touch of Alladin's lamp and satisfy yourself that the slumbering East is awake indeed and can, given the opportunities, given the freedom from foreign domination, achieve impossible goals. The First Five Year Plan which will soon be reaching its end and the Second Five Year Plan which will progress the work of building the new India are our blue prints which inspire hope and courage in our hearts.

What about the *raison d'être* for all that we are saying?

It is a well known fact—and I need not reiterate it—that the foundation stone of Indian economy has all along been agriculture. The phenomenal increase in population raises a harrowing ghost before our eyes. During the last five decades our population has gone up by 52%. The increase in agricultural and industrial production has by no means been commensurate with this growth of population. Hence the overall importance of increasing the food resources of this country. The central object of planning in India is to raise the standard of living and to increase the per capita income. The aim of the First Plan was to do this by about 15%; of the Second Plan to carry on the good work and to achieve a target of at least 25%. By no means, a small achievement. Hence, the urgent necessity of self-sufficiency in food so as to avoid the imports of this basic need of man, with a view also to curtail the expenditure of valuable sterling resources. The original target for the First Five Year Plan was to raise the food production by nearly eight million tons. It was intended to provide irrigation through new major works to more than eight million acres of land and through minor works to eleven million acres. Another important feature of the Plan was to reclaim and develop land to the extent of seven million acres of land. Hence, the importance of gigantic river valley projects, expenditure on which has run into astronomical figures, with the only ultimate idea of immediately acquiring self-sufficiency in food resources.

While even the First Plan (1951-'56) has not been completed, we can already raise our heads in pride and proclaim that we are now no longer dependent upon imports in the matter of food. Coupled with irrigation, the river valley schemes will supply over a million kilowatts of power, power which will be the coping stone, the foundation for the development of all indus-

try in India today. It is hoped to raise cotton production by twelve lakhs of bales, jute by twenty lakhs of bales, to increase production of handloom cotton textiles from about 800 to 1700 million yards, to have steel, cement, fertilisers, heavy plants for coach building, locomotives, all a part of this gigantic factory, conceived along gargantuan proportions and executed by the young technicians of India of today, ably assisted by foreign talent wherever necessary.

For the sake of simplicity, we could divide the present chapter into three parts, the first one dealing with Irrigation and Power Schemes which are perhaps by far the most spectacular, the second with Agriculture and Community Projects and the third with Industrial Undertakings, Transport and Communications, Scientific Research etc. Let us take Irrigation and Power.

While a number of projects are on the anvil, we will take as instances only two or three which are gigantic alike in conception and in execution. The Bhakra-Nangal is one such scheme which is multi-purpose, which was in fact conceived even before the Partition. Here we have a dam which will be 680 feet high—three times the height of the famed Kutub Minar—across the River Sutlej about 50 miles above the River Rupa in the Punjab. Object: Prevent a waste of about 90% of the waters flowing down the Sutlej which was going waste in the monsoon months. Mode of execution, in its extreme simplicity: Build a dam in order to create a vast lake behind it, at a spot where the River Sutlej passes through a narrow V-shaped gorge, even if it meant diverting the river from its normal channel at the site of the Dam by the construction of two diversion tunnels. The reservoir behind the dam was to be 50 miles long and designed to have a storage capacity of about 7 million acre-feet. It will be recalled that the Punjab has always been considered the experimenting ground for all irrigation projects. The land of the five rivers has responded most happily to these ideas in the

past. At Nangal, another dam was planned which would serve—

- (i) to regulate the daily variations in the supply of water from the Bhakra Power Plant;
- (ii) to divert the waters of the Sutlej to the Nangal Canal where they will be used for the generation of power; and
- (iii) to feed the Bhakra Canals.

Four Power stations have been contemplated along the Nangal Canal, two being installed at the Bhakra Dam site, a third at Ganguwal along the Nangal Hydel canal and a fourth at Kotla. The last two have already been completed. Each generating unit was to have a capacity of about 24,000 kW. The ultimate plan was to have a total installed capacity to the tune of 10,44,000 kilowatts. If you would like to have some more statistics, well, about 3,000 branches of the main Nangal and Bhakra canals have been contemplated which would irrigate a new area of 6.5 million acres of land in the Punjab, the Pepsu and Rajasthan every year. As regards the Dam itself, its length at the bottom would be 325 feet, length at top 1,700 feet, width at the top 30 feet, width at the bottom excluding apron 670 feet.

What about the cost of this magnificent project?

According to original anticipation, the total cost would have been in the region of Rs. 133 crores. About Rs. 24 crores were accounted for before the blue print of the First Plan was completed and another Rs. 95 crores during the period of the Plan. According to present estimates, the cost would be in the vicinity of Rs. 160 crores! Tremendous? But then remember that this will mean an additional production of over 1,000,000 tons of food, to say nothing of about 800,000 bales of long staple gin cotton per year. Believe it or not, in terms of money, it can mean an addition of Rs. 100 crores annually to the national income. So, the cost cannot really be deemed to be heavy! Remember also that the work at Bhakra alone meant employment

for 150,000 men at a time.

Now that you have formed some idea of the magnitude of the tasks which we have set before ourselves, have a cursory glance at the Damodar Valley Project, popularly known as "D.V.C." for the Corporation managing its affairs. This again is a multi-purpose development project planned to consist of eight storage dams with hydro-electric stations, a power station of 200,000 kilowatts, a power transmission grid, an irrigation barrage with auxiliary canals, distributaries etc., covering a length of over 1,500 miles, an irrigation-cum-navigation canal over 90 miles in length and so on. From the purely irrigational point of view, over a million acres of land would be benefited by this scheme. The project, however, has innumerable other ramifications, too varied and diverse to be discussed in details here.

Perhaps a third project which you might have a look at is the Hirakud Project which is one of the development units in the Mahanandi basin, contemplating the construction of a dam across the Mahanandi River about nine miles above Sambalpur in Orissa. Two irrigation canals on either side of the river have been planned as also two major power houses. Here the anticipation was that the scheme will help in the irrigation of an area about 1.8 million acres. The rivers of Bihar, it may be mentioned in passing, are the rivers of sorrow. In the past, they have brought, in the wake of repeated floods, dire distress to the teeming millions of India. Year after year, the scourage has been going on and man has remained at the mercy of the elements. Kosi, another river of considerable ill-repute, is a pointer in this direction. The Hirakud as also the Kosi Projects will stand as bulwarks against future floods which may well be considered a closed chapter in future. For the Hirakud Project, the total cost of the first stage was estimated at Rs. 63 crores out of which Rs. 55 crores were to be spent during the First Plan.

This is by no means an exhaustive picture of the

River Valley Projects. In addition, there are dozens of schemes afoot, in almost every State, in every part of India. Wherever possible, advantage is being rapidly taken to canalise the river waters and harness them along useful lines instead of wasting them. However, as it would be impossible for you to cover more than a few of these out-landish spots, only three projects have been mentioned.

Now, while planning is one thing, you may well be tempted to ask whether actual progress has kept pace with our aspirations. A very logical question.

Have a look at the actual physical progress made, for example at Nangal, 8 miles below the Bhakra dam, where a diversion dam, a barrage known as the Nangal Dam, about 90 feet high and nearly 1,000 feet long has already been completed to divert the waters to what is known as the Nangal Hydel Canal. This canal is 40 miles long, has a bed width of 92 feet and top width of 140 feet. Two power houses with an installed capacity of 48,000 kilowatts have been completed. The opening ceremony of this canal was done by Pandit Nehru on July 8, 1954. Similarly, on the D.V.C. front, the work on the 2,271 feet long, 88 feet high barrage at Durgapur in West Bengal to feed 1,552 miles of canals and distributaries, has already been completed very recently. This net work will irrigate over one million acres of land. It is understood that about 85 miles of these canals will be navigable and will be a great help as an alternative mode of transport between Calcutta and West Bengal. Similarly, the work on the Hirakud Dam is being pursued vigorously and soon dreams which have hitherto existed only on paper will be translated into very pleasant realities.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating experiments in social democracy in India today is what is popularly known as Community Development and Rural Extension Schemes. A beautiful partnership has been cemented between the people and the State in various

parts of India in which individual initiative and enterprise combined with benevolent State supervision have gone a long way in paying handsome dividends and making the people realise at each bend and corner that the India of tomorrow is being physically built up by the people themselves. Heartening results have been apparent as soon as the necessary seeds have been sown.

Since you will be visiting Delhi in any case, you will be strongly advised to pay a hurried call on either Faridabad or Nilokheri, both within reasonable motorable proximity of Delhi which will be definite eye-openers to you. Here are two model colonies established as Community Projects, essentially employed to rehabilitate displaced persons from West Pakistan. Both the townships have been built up mainly by the courage and co-operation of the displaced persons themselves and offer model educational, health, sanitary and recreational facilities.

So far as the Plan is concerned, the Community Projects have been allotted a sum of Rs. 90 crores for the intensive development of the material and the human resources in selected rural areas. The Community Development has been aptly described as 'the agency through which the social and economic life of the villages is to be transformed'. This is the function of the Private Sector, par excellence. For this purpose, each Project area, covering 300 villages and a population of about 200,000 people is divided into three development blocks, consisting of about a hundred villages each. Voluntary labour has played a vital role in this scheme and has rejuvenated village life. The experiment is being watched both in and outside India with considerable interest and should it yield satisfactory results, as there is no doubt that it will, its extension throughout the length and breadth of India would be inevitable.

The programme has a three-fold aim:

- (i) basic community development projects;

- (ii) composite development projects; and
- (iii) training centres for instructing village workers.

In the first part, developments in agriculture along with work in spheres such as health, education, road construction play a vital role. In the second, emphasis is being laid on small cottage industries. The third item needs no explanation. Financial aid from the Indo-American Technical Corporation Fund is much appreciated in making this idea a success.

We might now have a look at the industrial front. Here again, progress of a spectacular nature confronts us wherever we look. One of the most colourful products of industrialisation has been the advent of the Sindri Fertilizer Factory constructed at a mammoth cost of Rs. 23 crores, which has been equipped to produce about 350,000 tons of Ammonium Sulphate every year. The factory went into swing in 1951 and production to the extent of 1000 tons per day was reached a couple of years later. Here again, a new and attractive township has come up as if from nowhere. Sindri will help us improve our food crops no end and a long felt need has been fulfilled.

The modernisation of the shipping yard at Visakhapatnam is another major achievement of the new regime. The Planning Commission had laid aside a sum of Rs. 14 crores for shipbuilding in the First Plan. The present shipping yard at Vizag, as it is endearingly called, has since been taken over by the Government from the Scindia Steam Navigation Company. There are already two berths in existence. Ships from 5000 to 15000 tonnage can be built up, ranging in length from 320 to 550 feet. Ten ocean going ships and one small passenger vessel have already been turned out. There is an immediate programme on the anvil for building of more ships.

Steel is another major industry which is going to get a tremendous fillip in the very near future. Three

new steel plants—at Rourkela, Durgapur and at Bhilai—will rapidly be going beyond the blue print stage. A team of foreign experts will be available for technical assistance. Concentrated ministerial attention will be focussed on these projects. In the second Five Year Plan, a sum of Rs. 425 crores has been tentatively set aside for iron and steel projects alone. Here again, two entirely new townships will materialise. The pattern is, however, already familiar to us.

Space does not permit us but we must mention in passing such important industrial undertakings as the Telephone Factory (Bangalore), the Penicillin Factory at Pimpri (Poona) which has just gone into production, the Machine Tool Factory at Jalhali (Bangalore), the Machine Tool Prototype Factory at Ambarnath (Bombay), the D.D.T. Plant at Delhi, the Housing Factory at Jungpura (Delhi) and so on. The list is tiresome!

A word about communications and transport. Here we will confine ourselves only to the Railways for the time being. If Industry has to expand, it follows automatically that rail transport has got to keep pace with it. Besides, imports of locomotives, coaches and wagons have got to be curtailed drastically if our sterling resources are not to be drained away unnecessarily. The First Plan provided for an expenditure of Rs. 250 crores on the rehabilitation and development of the Indian Railways, in addition to Rs. 150 crores to cover the current depreciation of its assets. In the Second Plan, it is understood that a much larger allowance has been made. The Railways have meantime been regrouped along rational working lines into six zones, since increased to seven. Expansion Schemes include the newly built Assam Rail Link 142 miles in length, at a cost of Rs. 8.5 crores, the Kandla-Deesa (170 miles) line at a cost of Rs. 5.7 crores, the Mukeriam-Pathankot road at a cost of Rs. 3.8 crores and the Quilon-Ernakulam railway in the south, a distance of 96 miles at a cost of about Rs. 6 crores.

Perhaps one of the most spectacular results produced by the Railways is the Chittaranjan Locomotive Factory, the largest and the best of its kind east of Suez, completed at a cost of Rs. 15 crores, designed to manufacture originally 120 locomotives and 50 spare boilers a year, modest targets which are already being burst and production capacity geared up to give even more daring results. Very soon we should be on our way to produce all the locomotives we need.

Another interesting item of construction is the new coach building factory at Perambur (Madras). The investment on the project is now expected to cost Rs. 7.5 crores. It will produce a coach a day (350 light weight integral type of coaches per annum, made entirely of steel). The Railways have not yet got over the problem of over-crowding on some of the lines. The production of new coaches will go a long way to surmount this difficult problem.

In conclusion, a word about research, about the man behind the locked doors, who works on new scientific developments, away from the hub and noise of the outside world, cosily ensconced in the four walls of the up-to-the minute scientific laboratories which have been especially built for him. His is the most difficult role. It may not be spectacular. It may not receive much publicity but it is certainly very important as it is of the very essence. The Government have fully realised the part which the scientist has to play in the India of today and tomorrow and for this purpose, built a network of Scientific Laboratories dealing with Physics, Chemistry, Metallurgy, Fuel, Food Technology etc. in every part of India. Eleven important laboratories have already sprung up and are doing yeoman service to the cause of humanity. The Plan had made an allowance of Rs. 4.6 crores for this purpose. Besides the Laboratories the Plan also envisages assistance to a number of Institutions engaged in pure science such as the Indian Academy of Science at Bangalore, the Indian Association for the

Cultivation of Science at Jadavpur (Calcutta), the Institute of Nuclear Physics (Calcutta), the Natural Institute of Sciences (New Delhi) and so on.

A word about the future. If the First Plan went into action with a certain amount of trepidation, the Second one has no such limiting factor. Its objectives continue to be—

- (a) a sizable increase in the national income; and
- (b) rapid industrialisation.

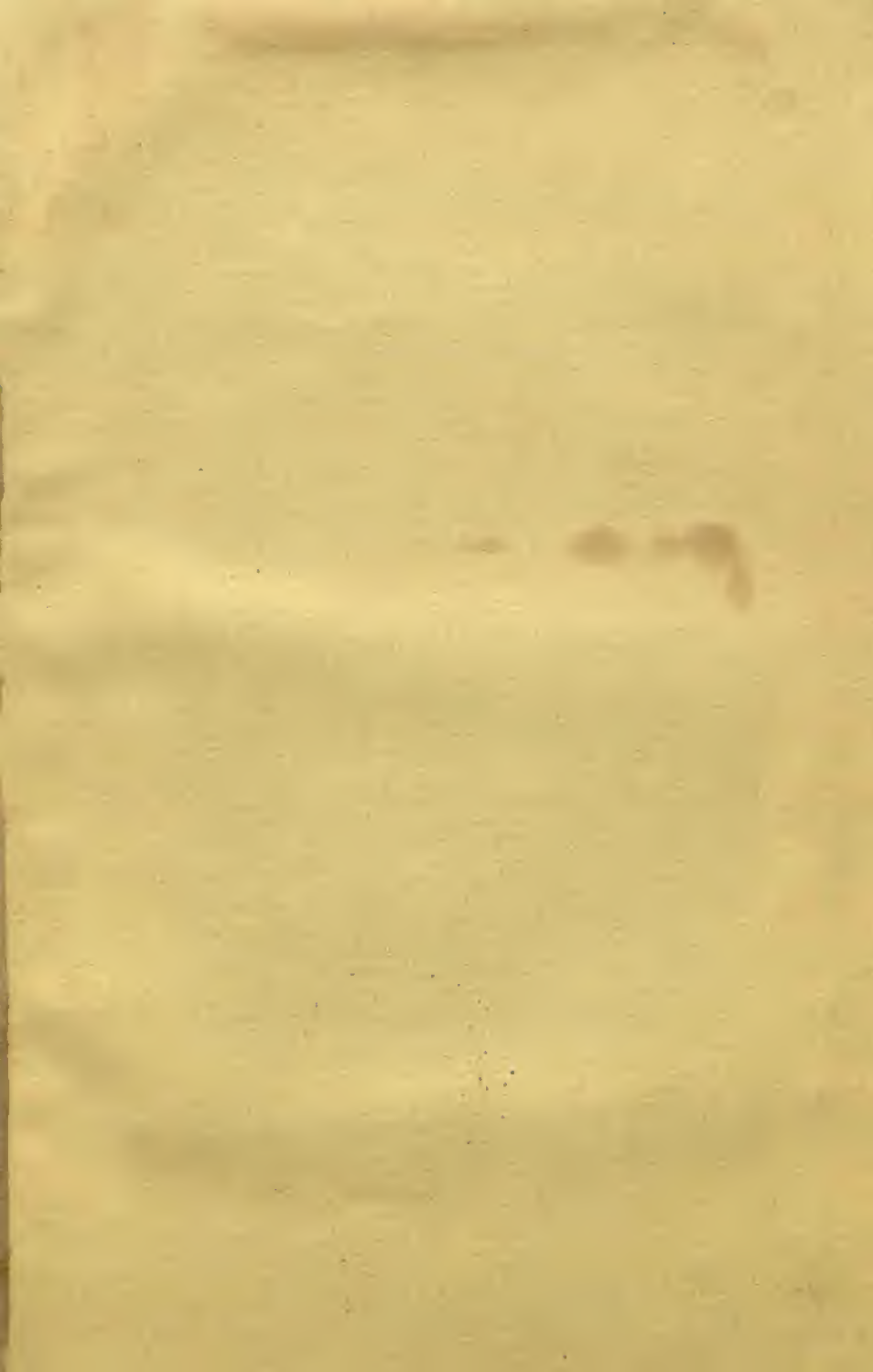
Emphasis is also being laid on fuller employment and social justice. To give an example: If the First Plan set aside a sum of Rs. 178 crores for investment in industry and minerals, the Second one is understood to have given a very generous outlay. You have already noted the proposed expenditure on Railway Expansion and Rehabilitation to keep pace with industry. No, once we have gone ahead, there can be no faltering. It can only be progress and more progress.

We have now taken a bird's eye view of the present Indian scene. It will be impossible for you to cover the entire ground. That is why only a few important landmarks have been suggested. You could have a look at any of the points which are convenient from the point of view of your itinerary, taking into consideration the time factor which will probably be uppermost in your mind.

Remember only this: We are not living on our past glory alone. We are building up for a future also—and with methods which are always democratic and peaceful.

Au revoir!





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